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Picture Plays

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# HOW TO WRITE MOVING PICTURE PLAYS

*By*

WILLIAM LEWIS GORDON

SHOW me the man who has reached the top in any profession and I will show you the man who knows not the meaning of "fail," a man who has faced issues unflinchingly, who has fought, endured and overcome obstacles, a man with ambition, patience, endurance, optimism, and perseverance.

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REVISED EDITION

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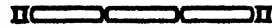
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free to each purchaser of this book.**

# GUARANTEE



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My dear Fellow-student:—

The presentation of this work to the public, at a trifling cost within the reach of all, and in a condensed, practical, easy form, has been my ambition—now attained.

I ask that you do not misjudge the value of these few pages by their number. I could spread these instructions over three hundred pages; I could issue them in lesson form and require that you study one lesson per week for ten weeks; but WHY such an imposition upon your patience?

I am truly proud that I have accomplished my ambition and condensed the work into a form that can be read and understood within a short time by any intelligent man, woman, boy, or girl.

These instructions, however, are not to be hastily read, then laid aside, as a book of fiction; it is necessary to study any text-book, whether it be rhetoric, arithmetic, geography, or photoplay writing.

Neither do I wish to imply that by following these instructions ANYONE can become a successful photoplaywright. This is not true. Everyone cannot succeed in any chosen profession. All students of medicine do not make successful physicians; every law-student does not make a successful attorney; neither will every student of the motion-picture play make a successful playwright. The author is therefore not offering this work with a guarantee that YOU will be successful. His aim is merely to place before you, to the very best of his ability, the correct technical form for constructing the photoplay, advising the best methods to attain satisfactory results, pointing out the common errors of the amateur writer, giving to the aspiring playwright the fundamental principles or foundation upon which YOU are to build your success.

Regardless of the many elaborate statements and "impossible guarantees" of some correspondence schools, SUCCESS CANNOT BE BOUGHT; it is for YOU to acquire

I sincerely thank you for the kindness in accepting MY work as your guide, and I truly wish you every success in the world.

Most sincerely yours,

W. L. GORDON.



# IMPORTANT NOTICE



## *To Photoplaywrights*

PLEASE remember that photoplays will NOT be read, revised, criticised, bought or sold by either the Atlas Publishing Co., or the author of this book. We are not conducting a correspondence school and cannot afford to maintain a department for this purpose, including these services, for the nominal amount charged for this book. Neither do we consider that such service will be required. We are confident if the student will devote his very best efforts, closely following these instructions, he will have no occasion to call for aid. It has been our aim to answer every imaginable question, to cover every feature pertaining to this work, avoiding the necessity of a criticism. Furthermore, the majority of film-producers far prefer to buy photoplays DIRECT FROM THE WRITER, and NOT through a commissioned agency.

If YOU are a purchaser of this book and upon selling your FIRST photoplay will write to me personally, giving title of play sold, company to whom sold, whether one, two, or three reels, price awarded you for play (and any other interesting data), I will mail to you a little gift in appreciation of the courtesy, as I am very anxious to hear of your success.

W. L. GORDON,  
ATLAS BANK BUILDING,  
CINCINNATI, OHIO

# DEFINITIONS OF TECHNICAL TERMS

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- ACTION**—The movements, gestures, and expressions of actors necessary to acting of play. Also called "scene action" and "stage business."
- BREAK**—Full explanation of "breaking a scene" in Section 17.
- BUSINESS**—See ACTION.
- BUST SCENE**—Full explanation in Section 19.
- BY-PLAY**—Scene action of minor importance.
- CENSORSHIP**—See Section 8.
- CLIMAX**—See Section 23.
- COMEDY**—A humorous play; one causing laughter.
- COMEDY DRAMA**—A drama with a humorous vein.
- DIRECTOR**—One who directs the producing of a play.
- DRAMA**—A serious play, usually containing a problem appealing to the emotions; a play requiring serious thought.
- EDITOR**—The person employed by producing company to read all plays received and pass upon their merits.
- EXIT**—Departure of an actor from the picture.
- EXEUNT**—Plural form of the word "exit."
- EXTERIOR**—A scene played outdoors.
- FARCE COMEDY**—Lowest form of comedy; absurd, ludicrous, unreal; not true to real life; highly exaggerated.
- FEATURE PLAYS**—Usually two, three, or four reels, and exceptionally good; the very best.
- FILM**—A transparent strip of celluloid upon which the pictures are produced.
- HEART INTEREST**—An appeal to the emotions.
- INSERT**—Any matter shown during action of a scene outside of the real scene action; letters, telegrams, etc.
- INTERIOR**—A scene played indoors.
- LEAD**—Parts played by the principal actors.
- LEADER**—See Section 17.
- LOCALE**—A French word meaning the place of action.
- MAKE-UP**—The costumes, wigs, paint, etc., used by actors in portraying the different characters.
- MANUSCRIPT**—The written photoplay; also called "script." Abbreviation of "manuscript" is MSS.
- MASK SCENE**—See Section 19.
- MATCHING A SCENE**—See Section 20.
- MELODRAMA**—Abounding with dramatic situations, hair-breadth escapes, villainous plots, heroic rescues from death, etc.
- MULTIPLE REEL**—A photoplay exceeding one reel in length.
- PADDING**—Term used by editor when necessary to "fill in" with additional business to make play more complete or to add length.
- PANTOMIME**—Acting by means of gestures and movements, without use of words.
- PHOTOPLAY**—A story told in photographic action. (See Section 3.)
- PHOTOPLAYWRIGHT**—One who writes photoplays.
- PLAGIARISM**—See Section 10.
- PLAY READER**—~~Same~~ as Editor.
- PROPERTIES**—See Section 21.
- "PUNCH"**—The portions of play which appeal; vigorous; full of force.
- REEL**—See Section 26.
- REJECTION SLIP**—The printed slip enclosed when producer rejects and returns a play.
- RELEASE**—The term used by producers when they place a new film upon the market; they "release it."
- SCENARIO**—See Section 16.
- SCENARIO EDITOR**—See EDITOR.
- SCENE**—See Section 19.
- SCENE ACTION**—See ACTION.
- SCENE PLOT**—See Section 12.
- SCREEN**—Surface upon which the pictures are shown.
- SCRIPT**—See MANUSCRIPT.
- SET or SETTING**—The background or stage setting used for a scene.
- SLAPSTICK COMEDY**—Very low form of comedy; actors stumbling, falling, fighting, chasing, etc.
- SPLIT REEL**—See Section 26.
- STAGE**—The portion of studio that comes within range of camera when scene is being acted.
- STAGE BUSINESS**—See BUSINESS.
- STUDIO**—The place where photoplays are acted and films produced.
- SUB-TITLE**—See Section 17.
- SYNOPSIS**—See Section 14.
- SYNOPSIS**—Plural of "synopsis."
- THEME**—The plot or idea of the photoplay.
- TITLE**—See Section 13.
- TRAGEDY**—A serious play, usually resulting fatally, or with loss of life.
- VISION SCENE**—See Section 19.



# How to Write Moving Picture Plays

By WILLIAM LEWIS GORDON

## Section 1.—INTRODUCTION.

Years ago, when motion pictures were first introduced, we often heard the remark, "It is only a fad, and will soon die." True enough, the crude, ridiculous films we saw in those early days have passed away. Then came better stories, principally one-reel plays. Today we have the double-reel, three-reels, five-reels, serial stories of many reels; we can sit for three hours and witness a spectacular production impossible of production on the legitimate stage, but never unattainable to the energetic film-producer, who takes his company of actors to Asia, Africa, Mexico, or Alaska, to secure the proper locale—who uses the whole earth, the ocean, and the clouds for his stage.

Photoplays are more popular today than ever before. They have come to stay. The highest class of legitimate stage productions are restricted for the rich, to the exclusion of the poor. Motion pictures have filled this vacancy, making it the international amusement from one side of the world to the other, extending to the rich, poor, and middle class its irresistible invitation.

It is approximated that over three thousand photoplays are produced every year, more stories than contained in all of the standard monthly magazines combined for the same period. Then, to what source must producers look to supply this enormous demand? A staff of two or three salaried writers for each company could never do it; but if such a task were even possible, originality would suffer, and there would exist a volume of sameness to each writer's work. The answer is, **THE PUBLIC MUST COME TO THE RESCUE**; and film-producers care not whether the writer is a clergyman, teacher, banker, stenographer, shop-girl, farmer, housewife, or invalid.

How many of us, among the millions of people interested in moving pictures, have not felt at some time or another the ambition to write photoplays? How many of us, upon witnessing some crude motion picture play, have not said to ourselves, "I am quite sure that I could write a better picture story than that?" Then, **WHY** have you not tried? Others are making a success in the work, and there is certainly room for you. If there is one field of work in this wide country where everyone is cordially welcomed, it is that of photoplay writing.

This work is now a recognized art. Film-producers are spending millions of dollars to meet increasing demands of the public, and one of the chief problems today is the scarcity of good plays. The constant and rapid growth of this immense industry should serve as an incentive to the aspiring photoplaywright when once convinced that fortunes are being spent annually towards the betterment of the motion picture, and that a liberal amount awaits him or her who can submit a good play worthy of production. It has opened a new field of work to every bright, imaginative mind with foresight to grasp the opportunity and gain prestige as a photo-

playwright before the thousands who will eventually seek entrance have awakened to the call.

The writing of photoplays is fascinating, while its remuneration depends solely upon the ingenuity, imaginative powers, and perseverance of the individual seeking success. The field is **NOT** crowded with good writers, nor does the work require a person of literary attainment or college education. A successful magazine or short-story writer may make a poor photoplaywright, finding it difficult to portray a story without the aid of beautiful words and picturesque descriptions, while the man or woman absolutely incompetent as a story-writer may make a highly successful writer of picture plays, where scene action takes the place of perfect rhetoric.

A recent estimate shows 20,000 moving picture theaters visited by 5,000,000 people DAILY; 500,000 people in some manner connected with the industry, and about \$200,000,000 invested capital. Consider the above figures, along with the fact that the commercial exhibition of motion pictures was begun only about seventeen years ago, while now producers are turning out hundreds of plays every month, and it will give you an idea of the field open to successful playwrights. These companies are spending thousands of dollars for good plays. The opportunity is therefore open to the man or woman who enters the work with fifty per cent confidence and fifty per cent determination, improving upon each succeeding effort until success is won.

## Section 2.—HOW ARE MOVING PICTURES PRODUCED?

A moving picture is a series or succession of pictures photographed on a reel of film by a moving picture camera. These reels of film are in lengths of several hundred feet; each picture is one inch wide and three-fourths of an inch high. The pictures are photographed and afterwards produced on the screen by the moving picture projecting machine at such a rapid speed that it deceives the eye and appears to be **ONE** picture, full of life, when in reality each play you see consists of thousands of separate pictures taken at the rate of about fifteen per second. A full reel contains about one thousand feet of film, and takes about twenty minutes to be produced on the screen; a double-reel, approximately forty minutes; three reels, one hour, etc. (See Section 26 for full explanation of single-reels, double-reels, split-reels, etc.)

We could write several pages pertaining to the manufacture of films, but consider it unnecessary to the writer's success. If our student desires to study every phase of the moving picture industry, we call attention to the advertisement in back of this manual, "Motion Picture Work," a large 618-page book covering every feature of the moving picture, its production and its theater.

### Section 3.—WHAT IS A PHOTOPLAY?

A photoplay is a story told in photographic action. Dialogue or conversation cannot be used. Therefore, the entire story must be unfolded to the audience by the "scene action" alone, unassisted by words other than an occasional Leader. (See Section 17, Leaders, or Sub-titles.) All emotions must be expressed by movements of the body, gestures, or facial expressions. Mabel, our frantic heroine, cannot exclaim to the villain, "Jack Howard, tell me where my chee-ild is or the setting of yon sun will seal your doom." In the photoplay Mabel points to the empty cradle - stretches forth her hands in appeal - Jack repulses her - Mabel seizes a broom and does not wait for "the setting of yon sun" to emphasize to the audience the real meaning of "scene action." Mabel's lips are in constant action, proving to us that she is talking in true, womanly fashion; but her expressions, gestures, and actions must supply the absence of words, leaving the audience in no doubt as to her entreaty, love, hatred, submission, revenge, hope, or despair.

The photoplay is therefore WRITTEN IN ACTION instead of dialogue or story form. Picturesque descriptions and clever conversation are essential to the magazine story, but are NOT WANTED in the photoplay.

The technical form of the written photoplay, required by the film-producing companies, embraces the Title, Synopsis, Cast of Characters, and Scenario. These four features are fully explained in the following pages.

### Section 4.—PRICES PAID FOR PLAYS.

Good plays are in constant demand, and at high prices, ranging from \$5.00 to \$100.00 and MORE, based strictly upon their merits, originality being one of the chief factors of success. Some prominent producers claim to pay as high as \$300.00 for good three-reel plays. However, do not strive for these higher prices until your success is assured in the "\$10.00 and \$25.00 class," and then work for the higher figures. We believe that \$25.00 is a good average for a one-reel play, \$50.00 to \$100.00 for a good two- or three-reel story.

Some producers are turning out four and five new plays every week; there are about twenty prominent producers, many other smaller ones, and new companies being organized every year, making a constant and ever-increasing demand for good plays. These companies are just as anxious to receive a clever play as you are to write one; it may mean \$50.00 to you, while to them the profit on this one play may total \$5,000.00 or more. I believe the time is not far distant when prices for good photoplays will be much higher than at present. It is therefore an advantage to establish your work now, if possible, and be a recognized playwright when this advance arrives.

### Section 5.—QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO WRITE PHOTOPLAYS.

An imaginative mind, quick to grasp possibilities and original situations, putting them in shape to be acted in pantomime for production on a screen. The play must therefore be produced clearly, enabling the audience to grasp the situation quickly without the aid of words. THE SCENE ACTION MUST BE THE EXPLANATION AND TELL THE STORY. Remember that your characters do not talk, and the acting must be very pointed, leaving no doubt in the mind of the audience

as to any particular situation or development. "John goes to the window, looks out, goes over to door and bolts it;" this is vague and meaningless. But if "John goes to window, looks out, startled, rushes to door, quickly bolts it, seizes revolver from table"—does it not convey that danger is approaching? The facial expressions, gestures, and movements as the story advances must take the place of words.

Scenario Editors do not care whether you are a graduate of Yale or a street-peddler, a renowned clergyman or a side-show barker; all they want is a story that is "something different."

It is claimed that famous musicians and artists are born, not made. I claim, however, that photoplaywrights are made after they are born. No one can be taught to create ideas, but anyone of ordinary intelligence can make a study of photoplays, take notes of every interesting idea suggested by a book, newspaper item, or daily event, and, by cultivating his imaginary power, develop it to the extent where he will be able to form picture plays.

### Section 6.—KIND OF PLAYS TO WRITE.

Try to emphasize acts of honesty, faithfulness, perseverance, courage, truthfulness, charity, devotion, firmness of character, true friendship, self-sacrifice, thoughtfulness, worthy and ambitious struggles for success in love and business. However, just as good are the stories portraying the folly and penalties of dishonesty, unfaithfulness, cowardice, untruthfulness, lack of devotion, weakness of character, selfishness, haughtiness, carelessness, waywardness, unworthy struggles for success, and similar themes.

In practically every story there should be an element of rivalry with one or more obstacles to overcome, whether it be a tale of war, business, or love. The public likes a struggle, where there are difficulties to master, regardless of ultimate conquest or defeat; and is more interested in stories of modern life than in the heroic tales of past ages.

When possible, have some moral to your story, and you may be preparing an effective sermon for someone, a sermon that will be illustrated before millions of people. It is best to give your story a happy ending. Life contains enough of real tragedy, and it is far better to have John marry Helen and live happily ever afterwards than to send your audience out of the theater after witnessing John hurl the villain down a hundred-foot embankment, only to find that Helen was untrue and had eloped with a former suitor.

Comedy is in greatest demand and brings the highest prices; this is because real good comedy is the most difficult to prepare. But should your inclination run towards drama, pathos, romance, historical, melodrama, Western, cowboy, Indian, or biblical, direct your work in the channel you prefer, giving it your very best efforts, and you are more likely to succeed than were you to attempt something not suited to your taste or ability. "A tragedian can never be a comedian;" or, if you have spent your entire life among cowboys, you would hardly be capable of writing stories around society life in New York. If you have been reared in the city, do not try to write regarding country life. You might be like the city girl who wrote about the farmer lad placing a halter on the hog and leading it to the stable; or the "rural route lassie" who wrote about the office man in the big city walking up ten flights of stairs to his office every morning, instead of having her poor, fatigued hero

take the elevator. Try to be perfectly natural with your characters; make them real "life and blood" people, and not fairy creatures. Write about the life and people you know and meet and associate with daily. There are dozens of little incidents that we see on the streets, in our homes, offices, stores, schoolrooms, read in the newspapers daily, affording excellent material for picture plays.

If you are writing a story involving a courtroom scene, you must know just how such a scene would be conducted; if you are not posted, you must inquire from someone who does know, otherwise some of your scene action will appear ridiculous to any attorneys in the audience. I once read a script written by a young lady describing a scene in a barber-shop. She had the barber meet the hero at the door, take him by the arm and lead him back to the chair; the hero handed the barber a quarter and told him he wanted a haircut; the barber poured a little tonic over the hero's head and commenced. Another story written by a country girl told of a millionaire merchant taking his office-boy to the ball game, then to a "swell hotel" for dinner. Imagine! The moral is—**KNOW YOUR SUBJECT.**

If you want to write a dramatic story, do not think that you must have a man burnt at the stake, or that you must kill an actor in every scene to bring the thrills. Suspense is more thrilling than an actual crime. If your hero is tied to the stake, the Indian is about to apply the torch, and you know that a company of soldiers are due to arrive, is not the suspense more dramatic and thrilling than it would be to witness the poor, tortured hero in flames?

Do not mix comedy with tragedy; you have only a few minutes in which to tell your story, and you cannot do justice to both in this short time.

Above all, try to be original and build plays from your own imagination, taking some incident that you have seen, read, or heard as the basis for your plot.

### Section 7.—KIND OF PLAYS TO AVOID.

Avoid any scenes or suggestive complications that may offend good taste or morals. Avoid scenes of murder, suicide, robbery, kidnapping, harrowing deathbeds, horrible accidents, persons being tortured, scenes attending an electrocution or hanging, violent fights showing strangling, shooting, or stabbing, staggering drunkards, depraved or wayward women, rioting strikers, funerals, and all such scenes of a depressing or unpleasant nature. Do not make a hero of a highwayman or escaped convict. Do not reflect upon any religious belief, nationality, or physical deformity. Thousands of men, women, and CHILDREN of all classes, nationalities, and creeds witness these pictures daily. We may occasionally see some play depicted which is contrary to the above advice, but they are the exceptions, and are to be avoided. Give your story a clean, wholesome, pleasant tone, leaving the few morbid tales for others to write. These tales of crime are growing less every day, and consequently the photoplay is growing better.

Do not copy your story from any book, magazine, or other moving picture play that you have read or seen. These are all protected by copyright, and you would make yourself liable to prosecution. I do not mean that you may not get your inspiration from some book, magazine story, or photoplay, but you must build your own story around this idea.

Do not try to write "trick" plays, where a beautiful maiden emerges from a vase of flowers, or a villain vanishes in a cloud of smoke. Only the producers at the studios are capable of devising these scenes.

Try to avoid using children and animals in your play. Animals are "bad actors," and many studios have no capable children. If you are in touch with several studios who employ children for these parts, it is all right; and many good plays are written where these clever little actors have important roles.

Do not write a story of your life; this would no doubt be of interest to Uncle Charlie and Aunt Martha and all of your cousins and friends, but would hold no interest for the other ninety million people throughout the country. A good plot may, of course, be built from some incident you have personally experienced; but avoid the "history of my life," which seems to be a favorite theme with so many young writers.

Wild-west stories are difficult to write unless you are familiar with the life of cowboys, Indians, and Western customs.

Avoid military stories or plays requiring a full regiment of people. They are very expensive to produce. I know they are popular, and perhaps in time YOU can write them; but just now I want you to write the ones easy of production, not requiring three hundred people in the cast, a collision between two express trains, the sinking of a costly battleship, or the dynamiting of a skyscraper, unless you KNOW you can convince producers that if they will spend a fortune to stage your play they will realize profits of five million dollars on the production.

Avoid "rough comedy" of the slapstick variety, where everybody is fighting, falling, running. This class of play is bought by a few companies, but very few.

Avoid the "seasonable" stories adapted only to Christmas, Thanksgiving, Fourth of July, etc. The average film is used for several months, while a "seasonable play" can be used only for a few weeks; thus its chance for acceptance is small unless story is particularly clever.

Do not depict the mischievous boy in a series of practical jokes, the hobo seeking a job during a series of mishaps, the bicycle rider in a series of tumbles, etc. These themes were formerly in vogue, but have outlived their popularity. We still see one occasionally, but we do not laugh as we once did.

If you are writing comedy, do not try to make your story "read funny." Your words will not be shown on screen. It is the ACTION that must make the audience laugh. The most humorous story you ever read might make the poorest photoplay comedy. "Joe spills a bowl of soup" does not make you laugh; but perhaps a clever actor could follow this stage direction and make the millions who witness the film-play laugh. Neither is a humorous climax alone sufficient; the comedy must run through entire play, from beginning to end.

After reviewing these restrictions, it may occur to the student that "there is nothing left to write about." Read closely every word of Section 6, "Kind of Plays to Write," and Section 11, "The Plot and How to Obtain It." There is not a daily paper that does not contain a dozen ideas; there is not a day of our life but what some incident we see or item we read will suggest a theme, provided we are observant.



**Section 8.—CENSORSHIP.**

There is now a National Board of Censorship that passes upon every photoplay from the standpoint of public morals before a permit for production is granted; and they condemn practically every story that could have a demoralizing effect upon the mind—murder, suicide, kidnaping, hanging, unlawful destruction of property, etc. There are many morbid people to whom such a suggestion would prove a temptation not to be resisted.

A play will often pass if it is clearly shown that the crime in question is invariably punished by law or conscience. Then the crime should be shown only by suggestion, not the actual deed.

A scene of robbery can be shown where the actual house-breaking or safe-blowing is not depicted. For example, a burglar can be shown on outside of house looking through window; then another scene flashed showing him in the house, but not the act of forcing open the door or window. A man may be shown drawing his revolver, then another scene showing his victim on the floor, but not the actual murder, only in cases of cowboys and Indians in warfare, which is no more than depicting history. A condemned murderer may be shown leaving his cell for the death-march, but not the execution. I give these illustrations to show the limitations of the Censorship Board for the benefit of those who feel determined to show such scenes; but would suggest avoiding them altogether when possible.

(See Scenes 4 and 5 of sample play, showing how to avoid censorship when portraying a crime. We do not show the actual forcing of the window.)

The writing of war plays, Western stories, cowboys, and Indians, of course necessitates employing firearms, weapons, shooting, etc., and is permissible in depicting historic customs and military life.

In many cities there is often a local censorship board which passes upon all plays. Thus a questionable story might pass the National Board and then be rejected by the city board. The moral is—**MAKE YOUR STORY CLEAN, WHOLESOME, and out of reach of ANY censorship.** There are too many happy inspirations to necessitate writing of murders and suicides. Let the newspaper reporters write of them; they are compelled to do so, while we are not. You would not want YOUR story thrown on the screen, depicting a suicide, and the next day read in the paper where some morbid girl was tempted to destroy her life through witnessing your play. To the reverse would be your story of an unfortunate girl, tempted, exerting her will-power, overcoming the temptation, redeemed to a life of usefulness and happiness. Don't destroy, but help make the world better.

**Section 9.—DRAMATIZATION.**

**DO NOT TRY TO DRAMATIZE A BOOK OR POEM.** The experienced scenario editors at the various studios do this work themselves; an amateur is not capable. Then, too, it would be folly unless you knew positively that the book, story, or poem has not already been dramatized. If it is a good subject, the chances are ten to one that it has already been dramatized. But if you are walking down the street and see a blind (?) beggar with outstretched hat, a policeman approaches, the blind (?) beggar SEES the officer and runs, and this incident suggests a story, rest assured that the scenario editor did not also see it. Remember, however, that he has read all of the late and standard books, poems, and

magazines, and practically every one worth while has been dramatized.

If you are determined to try your hand at dramatization, the only possible way is to write the publishers of the book or magazine controlling the copyright and buy the privilege.

**Section 10.—PLAGIARISM.**

A plagiarist is one who purloins the writing of another and passes it off as his own. A person guilty of stealing the ideas or writings of another is as much a criminal as the man who robs the cash-drawer.

All standard books, magazines, poems, etc., are fully protected by copyright, and any attempted infringement subjects the plagiarist to prosecution. Even if a book, story, photoplay, or poem is not copyrighted, the author has recourse under common law if the theft can be proven.

This does not mean, however, that you may not get your idea or inspiration for a play from some book, story, or other photoplay, but around this suggestion you must build your own plot.

**Section 11.—THE PLOT AND HOW TO OBTAIN IT.**

It is first of all necessary to conceive a plot around which to build your picture story. Sometimes this idea, or theme, will constitute your opening scene; then build one situation upon another, each one working towards one climax. Again, your first idea may suggest the climax, and you must then build your situations until you reach this climax. **HAVE AN ELEMENT OF SUSPENSE RUNNING THROUGHOUT YOUR ENTIRE STORY.** Too many writers think that one good situation is sufficient to make a good play. This is not true. The interest must run through the entire play. **EACH INDIVIDUAL SCENE SHOULD BE FULL OF INTEREST.** Devote all of your attention to the action of the play and not to the words you are using to describe it; the words will generally come without any trouble, if your idea is well-fixed. The words are not going to be produced on the screen; a flow of beautiful words may constitute the good magazine story, but **ACTION** makes the photoplay.

Pick up any daily newspaper, read the smaller items as well as the larger ones, and see if you cannot discover half a dozen ideas for plays. There is seldom a day that we cannot discover some incident that affords good material. In our homes, on the streets, in the newspapers—the world is full of themes. Perhaps you may see a picture play, and an idea immediately suggests itself how you could alter the whole story, taking it along an entirely different road. Allegorically speaking, five men enter the same depot, take five different trains, depart in as many different directions, arriving at five different destinations, all starting from the same point. So it is with your plot or theme. A magazine story, book, or newspaper item may give you the idea for an entirely different story; but under no circumstances must you copy the idea from the book or magazine, which is protected by copyright. Nothing can prevent you, however, from getting your idea from some such reading and building your own original story suggested by this idea.

It is a great advantage to attend as many moving picture shows as possible; study these pictures closely,

make a note of their style, and it will aid you materially in determining the kind of plays to write.

Keep a note-book handy and jot down any amusing or interesting item that you read, or any incident that you see or hear. You can soon acquire a large stock of ideas for plots, as well as situations with which to build them.

When you have an idea, put it down in your note-book at once, before you forget it. Get a scrap-book and paste in it every item of interest pertaining to your work.

Let the moving picture theater be your schoolroom, this manual your text-book. If you see a play that impresses you, watch it run from beginning to end two or three times, study its many features, make notes of the strong points, and profit thereby.

There has no doubt been many an incident in your life, and in those of your friends, around which as good plays could be formed as from any book or magazine story you ever read.

Another suggestion is, that you occasionally secure a copy of some moving picture trade journal, which you can buy at any prominent news-stand for ten cents, and which will prove of great interest to you. They give a synopsis of every new play being released each week, and will keep you in close touch with the kind of plays each company is producing, the progress of this immense industry, and will undoubtedly serve as an incentive, or "stimulant," to forge ahead AND WIN SUCCESS. A physician advances in his profession by studying medical books, an attorney by close application to his law-books, the photoplaywright by reading all matter pertaining to HIS work and studying the ideas of others.

Do not think, when we say "new plots are wanted," that the field is limited. There have been thousands of stories written about elopements; but this does not signify that YOU cannot devise a new story based on an elopement. There have been thousands of stories about auto accidents, stolen money, unrequited love, extravagant wives, unfaithful husbands, and self-made men, and the years to come will bring thousands of other stories on these very same subjects, the foundation the same, the trend of the tale different—a new story on an old theme. The foundations of ten new houses may be identical, but on these ten foundations we may erect ten houses, no two alike. So it is with the photoplay and its plot.

Remember, that a drama must be really dramatic, that a comedy must be really humorous, and do NOT depend upon one or two short situations of dramatic or comedy value to carry the burden of entire play. Every photoplay should have, first, a motive, then an effect. Make it open with interest, to arouse attention, introduce your principal characters, MAKE CLEAR TO AUDIENCE WHAT YOUR MOTIVE IS, keep up the interest with each succeeding scene to hold suspense, and then close with a big scene to satisfy the audience and make everyone say, "That was great from beginning to end."

Strange to say, the city-bred man or woman often prefers to write of country life, while the farmer-boy or girl has the ambition to write a story of the city. Do not attempt this NOW; write of the life you know until your success is assured, and then turn your ideas towards other themes. Above all, encourage an ambition to elevate the photoplay by writing good, clean, inspiring stories; and on American subjects, which are best and far more appreciated by American producers and the American public than foreign stories.

I picked up my morning paper one day to see if I could discover, within twenty minutes, a half-dozen ideas that could be worked into photoplay plots. Here is the result:—

1. I read of a man suing his wife for divorce because she attended a card-party every day. The wife, in testifying, claimed that while she was away hubby entertained the ice-man, milk-man, and butcher, and consumed a case of beer every day.

2. Another item told of the dual life of a man who was a model husband by day, a Raffles by night.

3. An umbrella-mender died, leaving a letter which told of a blighted romance in his earlier days; he had at one time been worth \$100,000.

4. A storage company was defendant in a suit; their moving-vans had backed up to the wrong door and moved the household effects of a bachelor, who returned from work in the evening and found his rooms bare.

5. A darkey found one thousand dollars in an old clock, started out for the time of his young life, only to discover that it was old Confederate money.

6. A young Romeo, disguised as a peddler, drove up to the home of his Juliet in a spring-wagon; his fiancée leaped into the seat under the eyes of father. The elopement was successful, the father forgave.

These six items were not found under the large headlines, but in the five- and ten-line obscure items, and all noted in my book within fifteen minutes instead of the twenty I had granted myself. I do not imply that there is anything particularly inspiring about any of these ideas; it may appear contradictory to the advice given above to help elevate the photoplay; but my aim is to show how easy it is to find plots everywhere, if we are observant.

## Section 12.—PREPARATION OF MANUSCRIPT.

This is very important. If possible to do so, have your play neatly copied on a typewriter. Some producers refuse to read a script unless it is typewritten. They ALL prefer the typewritten manuscript, but there are others who will gladly consider it if written in a neat, legible hand, with BLACK ink. Never use a red or colored ink, and NEVER USE A PENCIL.

See LIST OF FILM-PRODUCING COMPANIES, included with this book, which gives names of those demanding typewritten scripts and those who will accept plays written in a neat, legible hand.

Use white, unruled paper, 8½ x 11 inches in size; several sheets can be secured for a few pennies at any stationer's or printer's. Never use notepaper, fool's-cap, tablet paper, or any other odd kind; it will mark you as a novice.

In purchasing paper, ask for "twenty-pound bond;" a heavier paper will cost too much in postage, while a thin paper will show the writing through sheet when placed one over the other. Any kind or quality of paper will do for your carbon copy or the copy you retain for yourself. (See advertisement in back pages of this book, covering manuscript paper, and envelopes.)



**WRITE ON ONE SIDE OF THE PAPER ONLY.**

On your first sheet is the Title, Synopsis, and Cast of Characters; whether or not the above takes one or more sheets, always begin on a fresh sheet with your Scenario. (See sample play for correct technical form.)

Place your name and full address in upper left-hand corner of each page. Place Title of your play in upper right-hand corner of each page, following title page. The above precaution prevents lost pages when separated by the scenario editor. In the upper right-hand corner of title page write, "Submitted at usual rates," "Submitted at price of \$ . . . ,", or "Please make offer." If you use the form, "Submitted at usual rates," you must then accept the amount sent you, which producer considers is full worth of your play. If you state, "Submitted at price of \$ . . . ,", it is then optional with producer to send you price asked for play or return manuscript. If you say, "Please make offer," it remains optional with you, and you may accept or reject the offer.

We prefer and suggest the first method, "Submitted at usual rates." Should you then be dissatisfied with the amount paid, you can send your next play to some other company. We firmly believe that you will receive a fair price and all that your play is worth. It also proves to the producers that you have confidence in their integrity, at the same time saving them and yourself much time by demanding that they first name a price; and neither are you running the chance of over-estimating the value of your work by naming price.

Number the pages of your Scenario in center of each page (see sample play); it is unnecessary to number the first, or title page.

If your play is written on typewriter, have it "double-spaced" (like sample play herein; this leaves room between lines for editor to make corrections and notes). Make a carbon copy of it, sending the original copy to the producer and retaining the carbon copy for yourself. If you write it by hand, make an extra copy for yourself. It is possible, but not probable, that the original script may be lost in the mails. Never send the duplicate or carbon copy to editor; this would be the same principle as lighting a ten-cent cigar and then handing a stogie to your friend.

As soon as you have met with success, buy a typewriter; that is, unless you have access to a borrowed one or have some friend who will copy your plays on the typewriter. A rebuilt machine can be bought at a typewriter agency in any city, prices ranging from \$15.00 to \$50.00. Two or three days of practice will enable anyone to learn to manipulate it; no science is required—only practice. Any agency will also rent a machine to you for a very nominal fee, applying this rental to purchase price should you later decide to buy it. If you have no access to an agency, and should decide to buy a typewriter, address a personal letter to me and I will put you into communication with one or more agencies in Cincinnati.

See advertisement of our **MANUSCRIPT DEPARTMENT** in back of this book.

Some writers make their manuscript all the more complete by including a Scene Plot; but this is not demanded for the reason that producers will likely make a few changes in your scenario, altering the number of scenes, omitting one here and adding one there. This would destroy the value of your scene plot. However, I give below an example for the guidance of any who desire to use it:—

**SCENE PLOT:****EXTERIORS—**

Street scenes, 1, 6, 12.  
Wooded scene, 7, 13.  
Front of office building, 2.  
Rustic bridge, 8, 14.

**INTERIORS—**

Dining-room, 3, 5, 15.  
Hall, 4, 9.  
Jewelry store, 10.  
Banker's private office, 6, 11, 16.

(The numbers indicate the scenes for which these settings are to be used.)

If you can show title, synopsis, cast, and scene plot on the first page, do so; but in any event begin on a new sheet when you start the scenario.

If written on typewriter, you may single-space the first sheet (see sample play). I think it better to double-space the scenario (see sample play), though many writers also single-space the scenario, using the double-space only between scenes and between a leader and a scene.

Do not send diagrams, photographs, picture post-cards, etc., to illustrate how YOU think scene should look or stage should be set. The directors are paid to do this, and know far more about it than you do.

Literary training is not required, but this does not mean that every third word can be misspelled. Everyone has access to a dictionary, and can at least have words correctly spelled. Imagine the impression a scenario editor recently had upon opening a manuscript and reading the title, "The Solgers Sord" (the author meant, "The Soldier's Sword"); another, "A Dorter of Tenisea" (writer meant, "A Daughter of Tennessee").

After reading this section on the preparation of manuscript, I trust the student will not misconstrue my advice and attach too much importance to the technical form. It is very essential to have your script prepared in a professional style for easy reading, but I do not mean that a play will be condemned if the author should use paper eight inches wide instead of eight and one-half, or if he should insert his cast above his synopsis, or forget to number a page. These are **ALL IMPORTANT**, and help conceal the novice; but it is often that a play somewhat crude in technique will sell, where the plot is original and clever, while a script that is perfect from the point of technique will **NEVER** sell if the plot is weak and uninteresting.

The kind of envelopes to use for mailing, how to fold manuscript, and how to mail it, is explained fully in Section 28, after we are through discussing the play proper.

**Section 13.—TITLE OF PLAY.**

It is a good idea to write entire scenario and synopsis, then choose an appropriate title. Too many young writers think, when they have completed their play, that "any old title will do." But how many times, in strolling past a picture-theater, have you been attracted by a poster bearing a clever title; and how many times have you paid your five or ten cents to see "a certain picture" because the title was appealing?

If an editor is confronted by a title of no interest, he is prejudiced before he reads one word of the synopsis. The fact that your title will either appeal or lack interest to scenario editor often determines whether he will proceed to read manuscript with due respect or merely review it in a limited manner. This should impress upon you the importance of a strong, clever, appealing title.

Imagine my surprise recently when I opened a manuscript and read the title, "The Bride's Feat." The play was supposed to be a drama, but the title would signify a comedy.

Choose an attractive title—not too long. Avoid one that contains eight or ten words; this may be necessary at times, but two, three, four, or five words is far preferable.

A title THAT WILL APPEAL TO THE CURIOSITY is very important to the producer in advertising the film, therefore of much value to YOU in getting your work accepted. These producers are in business to make money, and if they can display a poster advertising a play with an attractive, appealing title that will make the nickels flow into their coffers, it is attaining their desires.

Make the title suggest something definite—one of suspense, and not one that tells your story before it begins. Do not call your play, "The Derelict's Return;" call it, "The Derelict." Make the audience await his return; why tell them before you begin that he will eventually return? Do not name your story, "The Deserter's Vindication;" call it, "The Deserter," or, "The Deserter at Bay," or, "The Deserter's Child," or "The Deserter's Mission," or some other title suitable for your play without telling audience at the very start that your deserter will finally be vindicated; this destroys much of the suspense, and we know what to expect as the story advances. Do not call it, "A Fortune Regained;" name it, "A Fortune at Stake." Make us wait and see whether or not it will be regained.

Do not give playtitle of your principal character unless it be someone well known in history. "Roy Samuels," "Joe Matthews," or "Esther Hall," means nothing to the reader, while George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte, or Abraham Lincoln would attract.

Avoid the stock expressions for titles such as, "Bread Cast Upon the Waters," "The Tie that Binds," "The Lane that had no Turning," "Where Ignorance is Bliss," "For His Brother's Sake," "The Wages of Sin," "An Eye for an Eye," "A Little Child shall Lead Them," etc. These are old, stereotyped phrases that are time-worn by constant usage. Originality in the title plays as important a part as originality in the theme.

The following examples are the kind that excites curiosity and makes us want to know "what it is all about":—

The Intercepted Letter.  
A Woman's Privilege.  
An Interrupted Honeymoon.  
When the Clock Struck One.  
The Midnight Intruder.  
A Book Agent's Dilemma.  
A Counterfeit Dollar.  
The Unsealed Envelope.  
Another Man's Wife.  
A Night of Peril.

#### Section 14.—SYNOPSIS.

The synopsis is of vital importance to YOU. Your scenario may be excellent, and if your synopsis is unattractive, the scenario editor may be prejudiced at the very start and not give the scenario the attention it deserves. But if your synopsis is attractive and appealing, the editor will certainly go on and on until he has read the scenario from beginning to end.

Producing company often uses this synopsis for advertising the film in various trade journals, and is therefore doubly pleased if the synopsis is attractive.

IT IS WELL TO COMPLETE YOUR SCENARIO FIRST AND THEN WRITE YOUR SYNOPSIS. Having the completed scenario before you will enable you to use every strong feature of the story in writing the synopsis.

It is not sufficient to say, "After several misfortunes, Bob succeeds in winning Maude's hand." You must relate in as few words as possible an outline of these misfortunes. Bob may have experienced some original adventure that will go a long way towards an acceptance of your play. You are not doing yourself justice, and neither does the editor know the substance of story without reading scenario. Say, "Bob is locked in a closet by the villain, breaks down the door, misses his train, rents an automobile, has a wild chase through the country, collides with a farmer's wagon, is arrested, etc."

Try to limit your synopsis to not more than two hundred words; an editor with one hundred manuscripts before him would far rather read two hundred words than five hundred. However, this is not imperative, and you should do ~~your~~ story justice by including in the synopsis all the appealing touches of your play, even should it take more words to do so.

Try to put your Title, Synopsis, and Cast of Characters on the first sheet; in any event, always begin scenario on a fresh sheet, marking the first sheet of your scenario, "Page No. 1." It is unnecessary to number your title page. (See sample play.)

In writing your synopsis, do not say:—

"John Dawson was a tall, broad-shouldered, handsome man of twenty-five, deeply in love with pretty Jane Walker, the village belle. However, he has a jealous rival in the person of Frank Morris. Jane is quite undecided as to whom she prefers, one moment believing that John has established greater favor in her eyes," etc.  
Write it, instead:—

"John Dawson and Frank Morris are jealous rivals for the hand of Jane Walker, village belle. Jane is undecided as to her preference."

We have there in twenty-three words what was unnecessarily expressed in more than fifty words. Omit all superfluous words and descriptions, including in a brief manner all strong points of your story. (Note brevity of synopsis in sample play, and also the fact that all the important features of story are included.)

Some writers consider it a good idea to allow a critical friend to read the synopsis when it is completed, and pass judgment. But every "friend" is inclined to praise your efforts, tell you the story is far better than the majority produced, and that it certainly ought to sell. Admit, kind student, that if he or she did not express a favorable comment the friendship would be severed. It is possible, though, they might suggest some additional point or situation to strengthen your plot.

#### Section 15.—CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Try to limit your cast to a few characters; too many are confusing. Keep all principal characters together as nearly as possible. Do not have a character appear in first scene and then not reappear until the last scene. Introduce all of your principal characters as early in

the play as possible, or your audience may form an attachment for the characters shown at start of the story, and when one of your chief characters appears towards the middle of the play it will be impossible to extend the same interest to him as if they have been following his movements from the start. (Note in sample play we introduce our three principal characters in the very first scene.) Use as few minor characters as possible, for the clearness of your play.

The interest should center around just ONE principal character, and never leave that character. If John and Frank love Jane, and your story deals with the hardships and obstacles that John must overcome to win her hand, the interest must all center around John. It is true that Frank and Jane are playing important roles, but it is John's success or failure for which we are waiting. If Jane is a designing woman, and it is her purpose to lead both John and Frank to further her father's success, and THIS is your plot, then Jane is the principal character, and all interest must center around her and her plans and progress. It is hardly possible to write a story without some principal character around whom to center the interest. (In sample play all action is centered around Roy.)

Your Cast is arranged in much the same manner as any theater program. Following are some ideas as to form:—

#### CAST (or CHARACTERS, as you may prefer).

Mabel Wilson, society girl.  
James Wilson, her father.  
Samuel Maxwell, a wealthy broker.  
Albert Maxwell, his son.  
George Barnes, a stock gambler.  
Maxwell's Butler.  
Wilson's Maid.  
Guests, stock brokers, clerks.

#### CHARACTERS.

Donald Thompson, of Harvard College.  
Cedric Thompson, his uncle.  
Robert Hall, Donald's chum.  
Alice Hall, Robert's sister.  
Margaret Dawson, a village belle.  
Expressman, pedestrians, newsboys.

#### CAST.

Gertrude Wright, an heiress.  
Grace Martin, a working girl.  
Walter Dixon, an effeminate young man.  
Frank Wright, Gertrude's aged father.  
Mrs. Martin, Grace's crippled mother.  
Prof. Campbell, in love with Gertrude.  
Minister.  
Druggist.  
Nurse.  
School Children.

It is unnecessary to give names to the minor characters—those not playing important roles in your story, such as the maid, the butler, expressman, guests, clerks, newsboys, school children, etc.

Please bear in mind, however, that a butler, maid, coachman, or valet may take one of the principal parts. Supposing the heroine elopes with the coachman, or the valet repeatedly saves the life of the hero, or the maid

turns out to be an heiress in disguise. They should then be listed with the principal characters and given a name.

Give the names of your leading characters at top of cast. The names you select are of minor importance. Unless the cast of characters are thrown on screen preceding the play (which is done only by some companies), or is used in some leader or insert, the name does not appear to audience. Choose short names; avoid names such as Montmorency Leffingwell; rather call your hero Ray Burns. Then call each character by the same name throughout entire play. For example, if the name is Ray Burns, do not say in one scene, "Ray enters - Helen greets Ray, etc.;" then, perhaps, in next scene, "Helen writes note to Burns, etc.;" Either call him "Ray" or "Burns," and nothing else.

Do not describe the personal appearance size, age, and complexion of your characters, thus:—

Mabel Wilson, a girl about 18 years of age; blonde, curly hair.

James Wilson, her father, about 70 years of age; over six feet tall; wears sideburns.

Make it read—

James Wilson, an elderly man.

Mabel Wilson, a college girl.

You can rest assured that directors will assign a suitable actor to each role. Such descriptions as "an elderly man," "a cripple," "a schoolboy," "a college girl," "a society debutante," "a broken-down actor," etc., are essential; an actor assigned to a certain role then knows the make-up and costume required.

It is also appreciated by editors if you note opposite the minor characters the number of each scene in which they appear, thus:—

Expressman in scenes 7 - 12 - 14.

Minister in scene 19.

Nurse in scenes 2 - 6.

Governess in scene 15.

In the example above, director could have the same actor take the part of the expressman in scenes 7, 12, and 14, and the minister in scene 19; he could also assign the two roles of nurse and governess to same actress, as they do not conflict in same scenes. This reduces the number of actors necessary for the play (Also see Cast in sample play.)

#### Section 16.—SCENARIO.

Scenario is to be written in a brief, clear style, short sentences, explaining clearly the different emotions of your actors, giving the scenario editor a definite idea of just what each character is doing by each movement, gesture, or expression. It would not be in proper form if we were to write as follows:

"Mildred is pacing the floor, much grieved at the turn of affairs. The bell rings and she leaves the room, returning immediately with Dick. Dick is very happy, but is suddenly surprised when Mildred repulses his advances. He stares at her in amazement."

It should be written in short, simple words, each bit of action separated by a dash (see sample play): "Mildred pacing floor - grieved - bell rings - Mildred exits, etc." It should be a "working scenario," just as though YOU were directing the actors as to each movement they make.

Always write your scene action in the present tense. Say, "Helen walks to door - hesitates - opens it - John

rushes in - excited - throws himself into chair." It would be improper to say, "Helen walked to door - hesitated - opened door - John rushed in, etc."

Do not use four or five scenes to get your story started. Make audience sit up and take notice at the very start. If your story is going to be about John and Mary's courtship, do not begin with John's birth, take him through his boyhood days, and put your audience to sleep before he is old enough to "go a-courtin'." A strip of film is an expensive commodity, and producers do not want to use three hundred feet of it before the real interesting part of the play begins.

Make your first scene full of interest to arouse attention; it is a poor play that cannot arouse this deep interest at the very start. (Note in sample play that interest is aroused in first scene by the appearance of Roy's brother, indicating that there is going to be trouble.)

Leave a margin of about one-half inch at left of each sheet in which to insert scene numbers, leaders, etc. (See sample play.) This enables editor to glance down margin and quickly note the number of leaders, inserts, etc.

Do not include minor scenes that have no direct bearing on play; each scene should contain some interesting situation, if possible, and have something to do with the unweaving of your story, and NOT merely to fill in. This does not mean, of course, that if necessary to take John through the hall on his way to the street, that he must fall down and fracture his limb in order to afford a little excitement; but it DOES mean that you must not rely upon one or two big scenes to strengthen twenty weak ones.

It is unnecessary to describe every little detail. If you say "love scene," the actors will know how to perform it without telling them in detail your idea of how John should place his arm around his fair one or whether he should kiss her once or three times. It is unnecessary to say, "John and Mary eat dinner - Mary pours coffee - John passes the butter, etc." Merely say, "John and Mary eat dinner." These actors have eaten dinner perhaps as often as you have; they know how. If you are describing a marriage, merely say, "wedding ceremony," without telling just how they enter, how they stand, how the ring is placed on the finger of the bride, etc.,—unless, of course, there is some important detail that has a direct bearing on your story. In the love scene, if John should place his arm around Mary and scratch his finger on her belt pin, or in pouring the coffee you want Mary to spill it over the table, or in the marriage service you want the bride to faint, you must, of course, state it. (See scene 1 of sample play, "love scene;" and scene 7, "excitement." These words express enough.)

Use the word "signifies" as often as necessary, to save words. Do not say, "Joe tells Irene he will not let the ruffians harm her." Write it, "Joe signifies, 'I will protect you.'" Don't write, "Irene answers Joe and tells him she will not marry him." Instead, say, "Irene signifies, 'No.'" This is one way in which you can often use bits of conversation or dialogue and often make your scenario more clearly understood. This, of course, does not mean that these words are shown on the screen; they are merely to describe the scene action more explicitly. (See scenes 15, 17, 21, and 23 of sample play.)

If you are going to jump from Helen's library to Robert's office, it is best to have at least one exterior scene inserted between the two, or audience might believe that the office and the library are in the same build-

ing. An exterior scene separates them. If Robert is leaving his office to visit Helen, it would be better to show him coming out of the office building, turning a street corner, or entering the porch at Helen's home, instead of making him walk out of office and immediately thereafter walk into Helen's library. (Scenes 32 33 and 34 of sample play illustrate.)

Do not be afraid that you are using too many scenes. The length of play is determined solely by the time it takes to act it, and NOT by the number of words or number of scenes. You are not restricted to any certain number of scenes. One play may contain ten scenes and take fully twenty minutes to act; another contain twenty scenes and not run fifteen minutes. For example: John and Joe are rivals for Daisy's favor. Scene, street corner. John enters - leans against doorway - Joe enters - they start fighting - Daisy enters - tries to separate them - crowd gathers, etc. Don't you see that it may take several minutes before the conqueror triumphs? But supposing John enters - leans against doorway - Joe enters - sees John - turns on his heel and runs, with John after him. In this case the scene will last but a few seconds. Thus thirty short scenes may not equal in length eight or ten long ones. (See Section 25, Length of Play.)

### Section 17.—LEADERS, OR SUB-TITLES.

Leaders, or Sub-titles, denote the printed matter that is used during action of a play to bridge over lapses of time or to give the audience a better understanding of the story, such as, "The Next Day," "Bob's Arrival," "The Conspiracy," "His Wife Returns," "Jack Meets an Old Chum," etc. (Sample play gives several examples. Also see Section 18, Letters, Clippings, etc.)

Leaders are to the photoplay as medicine is to our system; we need it at times, but the more we can avoid taking it, the better we are.

Were it possible to do so, the perfect photoplay would be one without any leaders, the scene action telling the entire story without resort to words. However, when this is attempted, the lucidity of the story is too liable to suffer, whereas an occasional leader of a few words will bridge over a certain combination of events, giving the story a clearness quickly grasped by the audience, and perhaps avoid the introduction of several minor scenes otherwise necessary to make the story intelligible. For example: John escorts Mary home from church, but when he calls the following evening she appears indifferent. We will say the fact MUST be conveyed that this is to be the following evening. How shall we do it? It is impossible to show all that John did between that hour and the next evening. He may have visited a nearby cafe on his way home, and would feel chagrined if we told. It does not concern us whether he went directly home or not. The audience wants to know how his affair with Mary will terminate. Our only solution is to bridge this time with a Leader—"The Following Evening;" then on with our story.

It is also necessary at times to "break a scene," which can be done either by flashing another scene for a few seconds, and then back to the original scene, or by "breaking it" with a Leader. Supposing Mary and John sit down to eat supper; their appetites may be of the best, and it would never do to tease any approaching hunger of your audience by forcing them to sit for half an hour watching Mary and John devour their evening meal. But perhaps we can break this scene by flashing a scene where Frank and Jane are on their way to visit

Mary; then back to the supper scene, showing Mary and John finishing their meal; this bridges the time it takes for them to eat. Another example would be where John is changing from his working clothes to his evening apparel. Do not embarrass John any farther than where he divests his coat, vest, collar, and tie. Flash another scene showing preparations at the ball-room where John is going, early guests arriving, etc.; then back to John, showing him now attired in his evening dress. (Scene 31 of sample play bridges the time between scenes 30 and 32, giving Nathan time to tell his story.)

For example of breaking a scene with a Leader, John starts to change his clothes, we flash the Leader, "John Has Misplaced His Hat;" then back to the scene showing John attired in evening clothes and searching the room for his hat. This leader bridges the time it takes for John to complete his toilet. (Also see scene 9 of sample play for another example.)

It is better to use a leader preceding the scene rather than interrupting the action by inserting a leader during the scene. Both forms, however, are illustrated in sample play.

It is also very convenient to use a leader at times to satisfy the Censorship Board. A murder is to be enacted: we show the villain point his revolver, then break the scene either with another scene or with a leader, then go back to original scene and show the victim on the floor and the villain standing above him with the smoking revolver in his hand; we have given the suggestion of murder without showing the actual deed. (Also see Section 8, Censorship, for other examples.)

Use your leaders sparingly; make the action of your play tell the story. Never use a leader as a matter of convenience to get around some little difficulty until you have exhausted every means to see if by making some little change in the scene action, or perhaps inserting a short scene, you can portray the story more graphically and impressively by the pictures.

We may often use a leader unnecessarily, where the action itself explains all that our leader told. One writer says, "Margaret Refuses Roy's Offer of Marriage;" then, directly following this leader, shows in the scene action where Roy's offer is spurned, making the leader entirely superfluous.

Never use a long leader if it can be avoided. Leaders of fifteen and twenty words are too long.

When we see a sub-title on the screen, it appears that the operator has stopped turning the crank and that the film is stationary. This is not true. The film is still running at rate of about one foot per second. Therefore, if the sub-title, or leader, consists of many words and must remain on screen for ten seconds in order for audience to read it, this means that ten feet of the film has been used for this reading alone, taking up that much of the valuable film instead of devoting it to the pictures. Then do not say, "John and Frank have been Friends Since Their Boyhood Days at School." Shorten it by saying, "John and Frank, Chums Since Boyhood."

Try to avoid using a leader in front of the first scene, directly following the title. We often see this done; but it is more or less confusing to the audience, and is far better to show the title, run the first scene for a few moments, and then break the scene with your leader, if necessary. (See scene 1 of sample play.)

A leader is ALWAYS used before producing the action it is to describe, and NEVER at the end of the scene or after the action has taken place.

Words and sentences spoken by the characters may

be used as leaders, such as: "She is My Wife," "This is My Penalty," "Go Your Way, I Go Mine," "Do You Call this Revenge?" "Here is My Story," "My Brother!" "I Thought You were My Friend," etc. (also see scenes 15 and 34 of sample play.) Such a leader is often far more forcible than any other kind; sometimes, directly after showing a leader of "quoted words," the audience can plainly follow the actor's lips while speaking the words of the leader, giving the play more expression. Madge has been separated from her brother since childhood. A tramp knocks at the door. Through the years of hardship on his face she recognizes her brother. The leader, "My Brother!" is short, explains the whole situation, and is far more expressive than if we said, "Madge Recognizes the Tramp as Her Brother." A wayward husband returns home to find his wife and baby gone, and a note from his wife stating that he will never see them again. Should it be at all necessary to use a leader, the quoted words, "This is My Penalty," might have more force than would, "John is Remorseful."

### Section 18.—LETTERS, CLIPPINGS, ETC.

These are used for much the same purpose as leaders, and are to assist in explanation of your story. They are absolutely necessary at times, but should be used as sparingly as possible. If the audience is forced to read too many of these letters, notes, telegrams, newspaper clippings, etc., it detracts from the scene action. Your audience pays to see a "picture play," and not to "read a magazine story." These inserts should be as brief as possible, not exceeding thirty or forty words. The first few words of a letter or clipping can often be shown, giving just enough explanation to render your story clear; or oftentimes the closing lines of a letter with signature is sufficient, without giving the entire letter.

When you want to show some such insert, merely state in margin, "Show Letter" (and then quote your letter), or "Show Telegram," "Show Newspaper Clipping," "Show Face of Watch," "Show Pearl Necklace," etc. Should you want to show a photograph in the back of a watch, the engraving on a jewel box, the printed title on the cover of a book, or some such article, at very close range, you can do so by using an insert as above the same as in showing a letter or telegram. Then say, "Back to scene," and go on with story. Sample play gives examples. Such an insert does not constitute a separate scene, as there is no action, while a BUST view IS a separate scene. (See Section 19, What Constitutes a Scene.)

If you use a newspaper clipping, do not say, "Show newspaper clipping telling of Helen's marriage." You must quote the article as you wish it to appear on screen. Producers are paying YOU to write the play. This does not mean that you should quote the entire article; you may use just the head lines or an extract from the printed article. (See scene 26 of sample play.)

A telegram should show the address and the signature. For example:

A. B. Wilson,  
502 Walnut St., Cincinnati, Ohio.  
Come home at once. Must close deal tonight.  
R. J. Thomas.

(Also see Scene 15 of sample play.)

If you are showing a letter, make it sound plausible. If Walter is writing a letter to his sweetheart, do not make it read:



Dear Lois:—

Thought I would write to you. Am getting along fine. Hope to make a visit home before long. With much love, Walter.

Do you think Lois would appreciate such brevity? If the idea you wish to convey is that Walter expects to come home soon, you could show the closing lines of letter, thus:

Show Letter... and will arrange matters to make you a visit very soon. With much love, Walter.

(Also see Scenes 1 and 22 of sample play.)

After using an insert or leader DURING THE ACTION OF A SCENE, say, "Back to scene," and then proceed. (See scenes 1 and 9 of sample play.) If you are going to use some former scene or stage setting, use the words, "Same as (and give scene number)." (See scenes 3 and 4 of sample play.)

### Section 19.—WHAT CONSTITUTES A SCENE.

Every time it is necessary to move the camera or change the background of the picture, it constitutes a new scene, and must be shown in your scenario accordingly. More than one scene may, of course, be made with the same background or stage setting (other scenes intervening), but each scene must be numbered consecutively. Do not write:—

"Mary leaves the parlor, crosses the hall, and goes out on to porch, looks up and down the street, and returns to the parlor."

Write it:—

Scene 5. Parlor. Mary exits into hall.

Scene 6. Hall. Mary enters. Exits onto porch.

Scene 7. Porch. Mary enters, etc.

This would constitute three different scenes, as it requires three different stage settings to show the parlor, the hall, and the porch, and the camera must be moved each time.

Then we will repeat Scene 7 and take Mary back to the parlor, as follows:

Scene 7. Porch. Mary enters—looks up and down the street—exits into hall.

Scene 8. Same as 6. Mary enters. Exits into parlor.

Scene 9. Same as 5. Mary enters.

To carry out the above, it has been necessary to employ three stage settings and FIVE scenes.

A BUST scene is where it is necessary to bring the camera real close to the character or object to be photographed, to enable the audience to see clearly what is being depicted. Supposing we want to show John in the act of altering a signature to a check, or show Mary removing some very small trinkets from a treasure chest, and it is necessary for the audience to see clearly every movement of the fingers. Perhaps we want to show a detective examining the finger-marks on some article, or show our soldier boy studying the photograph in his watch-case. In any of these illustrations the effect would not be as good if we kept the camera back at the regulation distance; we want a close or bust view, where it is discernible just what our character is doing. Therefore we GIVE IT A SEPARATE SCENE NUMBER and say:—

24. Bust scene. Detective examines finger-marks on tablecloth — smiles — satisfied — makes notes in book.

25. Same as (then go back to previous scene).

(Also see Bust scenes 6 and 19 of sample play.)

It sometimes improves the play to have the wayward son behold a vision of his dead mother or have your soldier boy, in a reminiscent mood, see the vision of "the girl he left behind." However, we would not suggest using these visions unless you feel confident that they will add material strength to your play.

Perhaps the best way, and the easiest for producers, to show a vision scene or dream is to say, "Dissolve into;" then give a new scene number and say, "Vision" or "Dream." (See scene 23 of sample play.) The photographer gives this effect by slowly closing diaphragm over lens, giving it the dissolving appearance. This vision, or dream, of course constitutes a separate scene. Then say, "Same as (number)," when previous scene is resumed.

If we want to show our character looking through a telescope, field-glass, opera-glass, keyhole, etc., we state, "Mask scene." It is produced by using a mask over lens of camera the shape of article through which character is looking. The scene on screen then covers only a portion of the screen, assuming the round shape of the field-glass, the shape of the keyhole, or whatever object we may use. This mask constitutes a separate scene, and must be numbered accordingly. (See scene 20 of sample play.)

Bust scenes are often used, and are NOT to be avoided if necessary to show more vividly the details of our scene action. But visions, dreams, and masks are more or less trouble to the producer, and should be resorted to as seldom as possible.

### Section 20.—CONTINUITY OF SCENES.

Try to avoid a long lapse of time between scenes, such as, "Ten Years Later," "Mildred Has Grown to Womanhood," etc. Continuity of scenes is much preferred. It is well if you can make your story take place within one evening or one day, instead of giving the life-history of your hero from the cradle to the grave.

Move your characters from scene to scene in a perfectly natural manner. Do not leave your characters standing in one scene, then flash another scene and have same characters standing in it. If they are to be in the following scene, have them exit before the next scene is shown and then enter following scene in proper order. For example:—

Scene 5. Library. Helen reading book—Walter enters—Helen and Walter have argument.

Now, in your next scene you want to show Helen's bedroom with Helen putting on wraps preparatory to leaving. Do not flash this bedroom scene showing Helen engaged with her wraps. Instead: Helen exits.

Scene 6. Bedroom. Helen enters—takes wraps from closet, etc.

This shows Helen exit from Scene 5 and enter Scene 6. (Also notice this feature running through several scenes of sample play; for example, scenes 1 and 2.)

The above is what we call "matching the scenes;" that is, making the succeeding scene match the close of the previous scene.

You must also show your events in their natural order. We cannot show George forging his father's name to a check and then go back, pick up the lost threads and show the cause of George's downfall. This is often done in writing fiction, but never in the play. We must begin at the beginning and keep going forward, never backward.

It is also very important to parallel your scenes when the action of play is centered in two different places. For example, if the good brother and the wayward brother have gone two different ways, and you are depicting the nobility of the one and the folly of the other, take them step by step, a scene of one paralleled by a scene of the other, the one brother going a step higher, the wayward brother sinking a step lower, until the climax is reached. Your story would prove meaningless if you should take the adventures of the one to the end, then go back, take up the lost threads and follow the adventures of the other. Another example would be a sheriff's posse running down the villain. If you should take your villain over "hill and dale" until he reached the deserted shanty where he hides, then go back and bring your sheriff's posse over the same route, it would lose the excitement of first showing the villain in his effort to escape and then showing the posse in hot pursuit, paralleling your scenes back and forth. (Notice paralleling of scenes all through sample play.)

In using this example of the sheriff's posse, you would not use the words, "Same as," in starting each scene, for the reason that each scene is supposed to take the posse and the villain a little farther along. Should the chase be through the woods, say, "Another wooded scene;" if it is in the city, say, "Another street scene." Camera must be changed, with a new background for each scene. Each one of these parallel scenes must bear a new scene number.

It is often a great convenience, and lends effect to story, to parallel scenes when we have some long scene to portray. Supposing our wedding guests sit down to dinner. We can first show the dinner scene, then the groom's rival in his bedroom plotting revenge; then back and forth a few times, giving the guests a plausible length of time to satisfy their appetites. This is also done to avoid censorship when some crime is to be suggested.

### Section 21.—STAGE SETTINGS AND PROPERTIES.

Only give the chief essentials in the way of stage settings or properties. If a fireplace in the room of your scene is to play a prominent part, write, "Room with fireplace." If the portrait of John's father is to play an important part in your scene, write, "Portrait of John's father on wall." If you are going to have Frank peep through a transom, say, "Door with glass transom." However, do not begin by saying:—

17. Dining-room. Table covered with dishes; chairs; handsome rugs on floor. Beautiful oil paintings. Plate rail with hand-painted china, etc.

Merely use an adjective—elegant, palatial, elaborate, or beautiful dining-room—and you can rest assured that directors will know how to arrange the scene.

Do not start: "Scene 1. Kitchen of humble home. Table, two chairs, stove in corner, dishes piled on table, etc." The stage directors know better how to set a scene

of "an humble kitchen" than you do. An adjective or two is often necessary to describe a scene, but that is sufficient. For example:—

- A palatial drawing-room.
- An abandoned shanty.
- A deserted street corner.
- A modest dining-room.
- A banker's private office.
- A cheap restaurant.
- A rustic bridge.
- A dilapidated tenement house.

### Section 22.—ENTRANCE AND EXIT OF CHARACTERS.

It is unnecessary to show C. (center), R. C. (right center), L. C. (left center), etc., for the entrance and exit of characters. Leave this to the stage directors.

The words "Enter" and "Exit" always have reference to the stage setting or picture as seen on the screen. If "John enters," he enters into the picture; if he "exits," he goes out of picture. For example, our scene is the front porch of Jim's home. Jim is on the porch; he goes into the house, but we say, "Jim exits into house," meaning he goes OUT of the picture. If he then comes out of house, we say, "Jim ENTERS from house," meaning he comes into the picture.

"Exeunt" is the plural of "exit." For example: "John exits," "John and Mary exeunt." (See scenes 1, 8, and 13 of sample play.)

If a character enters or exits in any other manner than on foot, so state it in your scenario. For example: "John enters in automobile," "John enters on horse," etc.

### Section 23.—CLIMAX.

The climax is the finish of your story, and should be full of intense interest; but remember that the climax does not alone make your story acceptable, the various situations preceding must be interesting as well. A good climax is essential, but does not alone make a good story. If the preceding scenes are dull and uninteresting, the audience will be indifferent whether John finally wins Mary's hand or not. But if his rival locks John in the barn and forces Mary into a waiting taxicab, Mary feigns illness and is carried into a wayside inn, only to escape through the back door, while John takes a pitchfork, breaks open the barn door, borrows one of the horses in the barn and pursues his rival, arrives at the inn only to find Mary gone, chastises his rival, takes the taxicab from him and goes in search of Mary, while his rival forms evidence against John as a horse-thief, causing his arrest and imprisonment, there is certainly action enough to make your audience want to know the climax. As suggested before, try to give it a happy, satisfactory ending, with a moral. By a moral, I do not mean that we shall convert the theater into a church, but if we show that infidelity, dishonesty, waywardness, etc., brings its inevitable penalty, there is a moral. If we show that the man with faithfulness, honesty, and perseverance attains his desires, whether it be in business, war, or love, there is a moral. By giving our story a happy climax we run no chance of leaving a bitter taste in the mouth of our audience. I admit that the majority of companies often produce tragedies and plays with a

morbid ending, and they do this for the sake of variety; but my suggestion to YOU is to let others write this kind.

Try to keep audience wondering and guessing just how story will end; keep up the suspense, throw obstacles in the way of the hero or heroine to make things look dark for success, then bring in the climax as a happy and satisfying surprise.

After the climax, close your story as quickly as possible. The story has been told, audience knows that Anthony and Geraldine are married and will probably live happily ever afterward; and there should be no reason to carry story farther.

Above all, remember that the best climax may be preceded by the poorest play. The most thrilling climax imaginable will be lost to the world, and never thrill, if the audience has been put to sleep by fifteen minutes of monotonous action awaiting the two minutes of thrills.

#### Section 24.—LIMITATIONS OF THE CAMERA.

Remember that these pictures are not drawn by hand; they are photographed, and it is therefore advisable to make the work of the producers as easy as possible. It would be rather hard to photograph a battle between two submarine boats, a struggle between two men in a balloon in midair, or a man jumping from the top of the Washington Monument. Neither should you lay your scene in Paris, Mammoth Cave, or Yellowstone Park, and send it to some New York or Chicago producer, unless you have been advised that they have a temporary studio at that particular point. A producer will often send his company to some such point in order to get the proper locale, or color, for a good play, going to much expense to produce it with the right effect; but our advice to the amateur is to make their work easy, laying your scenes in a way that will not be difficult to produce, and if your plays bear merit, they will certainly gain a quicker acceptance. If you are able to write a good play that can be produced almost entirely with the interior stage settings of the studio, it will gain a quicker acceptance than if it consists of a large variety of scenes, including, say, a river bank, a jail-cell, a mountain peak, an ocean liner, a Pullman dining-car, and a telephone exchange. Of course, all of these scenes can be visited and scenes photographed at each place, being necessary to many good plays; but if the young writer can start by lightening the work of the producer, his chances are better.

Do not depict impossible situations. Don't draw a scene where a train runs over a cow, causing a law suit. Cows, as a general thing, are not very good actors, and might object to your idea, no matter how worthy your ambition. Don't have a heroine rescued from a watery grave as she is sinking for the last time; the hero might lose his grasp and the heroine her life in attempting to produce the right effect. Don't have a lion chasing a horse through the jungle. The horse might pay no attention to his cue, and the lion might chase the moving picture operator up a tree instead. Do not write a story of an express train crashing into a siding and tearing another train into splinters. I admit that we often see these intensely dramatic productions, and if your play is particularly clever, the company MAY go to the enormous expense of wrecking two trains, or may ask the leading lady to risk her life in pretending to drown; but my aim in these instructions is to advise the aspiring writer how to meet with his FIRST successes; after this is accomplished he can then attempt the more elaborate productions. REMEMBER THAT

A PLAY EASILY PRODUCED IS FAR MORE LIABLE TO BE ACCEPTED THAN ONE REQUIRING THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS TO STAGE.

It is amusing how some young writers place no limit whatever upon the possibilities of the camera. One writer starts, "Moonlight scene, heaven covered with stars; a meteor falls." Now, how on earth is the poor camera-man going to follow these directions? He has no control of the heavens; and, even if his powers were unlimited, should he be requested to set his camera on a moonlight night and with his hand on the crank await the falling of a meteor? Another starts, "Scene 12, The Titanic at bottom of ocean." (Scenario editor gasps for breath and lays aside the manuscript.) Another goes to the trouble of stretching a rope from top to top of two skyscrapers on Broadway, and has two rope-walkers, rivals for the same girl, fight a duel with swords. Imagine! Pardon the slang expression of Mr. Editor, who returned manuscript with notation across this scene, "For the love of Mike, be reasonable."

#### Section 25.—LENGTH OF PLAY.

It takes approximately twenty minutes to produce a one-reel play, about forty minutes for a double reel, one hour for three reels, etc.

Your longest scene should not take over three minutes to produce; the play will become tiresome if same scene is on the screen longer than this.

The number of scenes for a one-reel play depends upon the length of the scenes. One scene may take four minutes and the next scene thirty seconds. It is impossible to tell just how long it will take to produce the play you have written. The only way by which you can get a fair idea as to this is to read over the play very slowly, allowing about the time you think it will take for the scene action, also allowing about the right time for the reading of each leader, and see how long it takes you to read the play through in this manner.

Remember that you are not restricted to any certain number of scenes or words; the stage directors can supply a few minor scenes if the play is too short, or eliminate a few if the play is too long.

The length of play is not determined by the number of scenes nor by the number of pages manuscript contains, but ONLY BY THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TAKES TO ACT IT. One play of forty scenes may take only twenty minutes to act, while another of only ten scenes may take fully twenty minutes also. For example: "Scene 7. John enters—hears noise—hurriedly exits." This scene would probably take ten seconds. But supposing John is not so easily frightened and stops to investigate, finds a burglar, grapples with him, etc. This scene would perhaps take two or three minutes. (See difference in length of scenes 14 and 15 in sample play.)

The only possible way to judge the length is to take your watch, note the time, imagine title is thrown on screen, allow about the usual time given to a title; then start with first scene, not merely reading it, but imagine you can see the characters coming and going, allowing for each pause, gesture, and expression; allow sufficient time for reading of each leader, letter, or clipping, and with a little practice you can soon learn to determine the approximate time it will take to act the play. Should it be two or three minutes undertimed or overtimed, it does not matter. Directors themselves cannot tell exactly, by reading a script, just how long it will take to act it. They will often add a scene or eliminate one, if necessary.



## Section 26. — SINGLE-REELS, DOUBLE-REELS, SPLIT-REELS, ETC.

A single reel of film is about one thousand feet in length, requiring approximately twenty minutes to display on a screen. A "double-reel" play would be approximately twice the length of the single-reel, or two thousand feet of film, requiring about forty minutes. A "three-reel" play would be about three thousand feet of film, requiring about one hour to produce. These stories written for double-reels and three-reels must, of course, be longer, consisting of more scenes, and bring higher prices than the regular single-reel plays. Some producers claim to pay several hundred dollars for good two- and three-reel plays.

When writing a two-, three-, or four-reel play, it is not absolutely necessary to close each reel with a climax or big scene. One good, strong climax at the end of play is sufficient if the preceding action is full of suspense and holds the interest of audience. Some companies prefer a minor climax at end of each reel, each a little stronger than the preceding one, until the final climax at end of play; but this is not absolutely necessary. If your play is interesting from beginning to end, you can leave it to producers to divide it properly into the different reels.

NUMBER SCENES CONSECUTIVELY from beginning to end, regardless of whether play is two, three, or more reels.

My suggestion is to try for success with single-reel plays; then, when your work is established, attempt the longer ones.

A "split-reel" consists of two different plays produced on the same reel of one thousand feet; the first one running, for example, twelve minutes, the other about eight minutes, neither one long enough to constitute a full reel, the producer therefore selecting two short plays and placing them on the same reel.

## Section 27.—REVIEW.

When your play is completed, read it several times, revise it where you think necessary, omit any scenes or portions that do not add materially to its interest, add a scene here and there where it will improve the strength of your story, and then ask yourself the following questions. If you can answer them to your satisfaction, send the play along; and if your first attempt should be rejected, try to ascertain any faults, revise it if you think it necessary, re-copy it if papers look worn or soiled, and send it to some other company. Some of the very best plays have been submitted to several companies before gaining an acceptance, and then bring a good price. **DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED; PERSEVERANCE WINS SUCCESS.**

Is manuscript prepared in neat form on plain, white, unruled paper of required size, my name and address on each sheet?

Have I carefully followed instructions as to technical form?

Are the scenes numbered properly?

Is my title the most attractive I can give this play?

Is my synopsis brief but of sufficient interest to arouse attention?

Is the only real interest in the climax, or does it run through the entire story?

Is it too extravagant in stage settings? Have I laid some of the scenes in Egypt, the wilds of Africa, or the North Pole?

Have I depicted a murder, suicide, robbery, kidnapping, reflection on some religious belief or physical deformity, or included any scene of an extremely unpleasant nature?

Is my climax strong enough?

Have I observed a continuity of scenes as nearly as possible?

Have I paralleled my scenes properly?

Have I failed to "break" the long scenes properly?

Is the general plot of my story original, or have I copied the exact idea from some other picture play I have seen, some book, magazine story, etc.?

Is my story too improbable, or really life-like?

Could I not arrange the play so as to eliminate some of the leaders without detracting from clearness of the story? Have I not inserted one or more merely as a matter of convenience?

Have I enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope with my play?

Have I placed sufficient postage on both the outer and the return envelope?

Have I retained a complete copy of the play for myself?

Have I made a record of company to whom I am sending play, title, date, etc.?

Does your play pass the above examination to your satisfaction? If so, it is ready for the market; and, **ABOVE ALL, DO NOT THINK THAT IF THE FIRST OR SECOND OR THIRD COMPANY TO WHICH YOU SEND IT SHOULD REJECT IT, THAT IT IMPLIES LACK OF MERIT.** It is the same as marketing ANYTHING; you must find the market for your particular "brand" or style of work.

## Section 28.—HOW TO MAIL MANUSCRIPT.

First of all, **NEVER ROLL YOUR MANUSCRIPT.** Editors will positively not read a rolled manuscript. It is really not necessary to fasten pages in any manner. If play is returned to you, the pin-holes or marks of the paper-clip are a tell-tale sign that script "has been traveling" should you send it to another producer without making a new copy. If you do fasten pages, use a pin or metal paper-clip that will not mutilate the sheets and can be quickly removed for reading; editors prefer to have pages loose, for easy handling. Never paste the edges together or tie them with a string or pretty baby-ribbon. Do not resort to the petty trick of gumming two pages, or sewing two pages together, or disarranging a few page numbers, merely to determine if editor actually read the script. It is a good way to have your play returned NOT read.

It is a good plan to place a plain sheet of white paper at back and another in front of manuscript, to act as cover to keep pages clean.

Fold your manuscript twice, from bottom upwards; your paper being  $8\frac{1}{2}$  by 11 inches before folding, after it is folded as above it will make a package approximately  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches long by  $3\frac{3}{4}$  inches.

Place manuscript in a long, manila envelope about  $9\frac{1}{2}$  by 4 inches in size.

Take another long envelope about one-half inch smaller each way than the larger one, address it to yourself, place sufficient postage on it, and enclose it, with your play, in the larger envelope, for return of your manuscript if it is rejected. This return-envelope should be large enough to contain the manuscript without extra folding, and small enough to go into the outer envelope without creasing. You can obtain a dozen or

more of these envelopes (both sizes) at your stationer's, printer's, or at the postoffice, for a few pennies. Address the larger or outer envelope to

SCENARIO EDITOR,  
..... Co.,  
(Street Address)  
(City and State)

Place your name and address in upper left-hand corner of this outer envelope for return of papers to you, if for any reason they do not reach the proper address.

If you buy a few of these envelopes, ask for sizes number 9 and number 10.

After you have met with a little success, it might be well to have a hundred letterheads printed with your name and address as below in the upper left-hand corner:—

FRANK R. JONES,  
Photoplaywright,  
508 Walnut St.,  
Cincinnati, Ohio.

This will give prestige and the appearance of a successful writer. Your printer will do this for a nominal sum. You can also have several large envelopes printed with the same heading.

See advertisement in back pages of this book covering a set of manuscript paper and the two required sizes of envelopes. Many writers find it more convenient to order this stationery from time to time direct from the Atlas Publishing Company. They keep a large stock on hand, and fill every order on the same day it is received.

The next thing to do is to make a record of the title of your play, the company to whom you are sending it, and the date it is mailed. I think the most convenient way for doing this is to fold the copy of play you are going to retain, place it in one of the long envelopes, and on the envelope write out this record,—title, company, and date. If play is rejected, make a record of date returned, name of next company to whom you submit it, and date mailed, etc. Then when it is sold, mark down the company to whom sold, date, and price paid, with any additional remarks you wish. In this manner you can keep a dozen or more plays traveling and at a moment's notice find a record of each,—just where it is at present time, times rejected, prices paid, length of time each company holds play, etc.

Take your manuscript to the postoffice and have it weighed before placing postage on it, as it will certainly have an ill-effect if your manuscript arrives at editor's office with postage due on it. Also be sure to place sufficient postage on the smaller, or return, envelope which you enclose with play.

Some scenario editors will refuse to accept a play from the postman if it arrives with "postage due." This is one of the chief rules to remember. Never send loose stamps for return of your script. Always affix them to the return envelope which you enclose.

You may send two or more manuscripts at same time in same envelope, if you desire, PROVIDED you send a separate RETURN ENVELOPE for each play. Company may want to return one script at once and retain the other for further reading.

When you have acquired success, you can buy a postage-scale at any first-class stationer's for weighing your manuscripts, avoiding a trip to the postoffice on each occasion.

Do not accompany your play with a letter to the Scenario Editor telling him that you are very much in need of the money (he will not accept your work as a charitable act); that you think play is well worth fifty dollars (he may think it not worth fifty cents); or that this is your first effort (this is perhaps obvious without telling it): all these things would stamp you as a novice. The PLAY is all the editor wants to read. The professional writer does not include these letters of appeal, and if you want your work to bear the marks of an "experienced writer," let the story speak for itself. If it is worthy, you will be paid for it, and asked to continue your contributions.

REMEMBER, if you can possibly do so, have play copied on typewriter; it improves the appearance and gives it a "professional" style. However, if you cannot do this yourself and have no friend who will copy it for you, write it in a neat, legible hand, or get someone who can write in a neat, clear style to copy it, following the exact form as to technical construction.

See advertisement of Atlas Publishing Company in back pages of this book, relative to their department for typewriting manuscripts.

## Section 29.—WHERE TO SELL PLAYS.

It might be very difficult to dispose of a really good play unless you are informed as to the companies who are in the market for the style of play you have prepared. It is therefore absolutely necessary that you keep constantly in touch with the most prominent producers of motion picture films, ascertaining the KIND each one wants and judging accordingly as to where you shall submit your work. It would be impossible for us to tell you exactly the KIND of plays each one of these companies is in the market for TODAY; their needs change from time to time. One company may prefer Indian or Western stories, another comedy, another melodrama, another historical, etc. Then there are times when some certain company may have an ample supply of plays on hand for a certain period; again, one company may at the present time be producing Western plays and in a few months from now may move this studio and prefer Mexican stories, or perhaps have a good supply at that studio and desire society dramas for their Eastern studio. In other words, a progressive and successful photoplaywright will keep in close touch with the leading producers, ascertaining the ones who are producing the style of plays he has for the market. It is therefore our suggestion that you select about five to ten companies from the list of producers (or all of them would be better), and write each one a letter along the following lines:—

Scenario Editor,  
..... Co.,  
(City).....

Dear Sir:—

I would thank you to advise me the nature of your present requirements, if you wish comedy, melodrama, Western, cowboy, Indian, rural, historical, biblical, or society drama, and the prices you are paying for acceptable scripts.

Also kindly state if you will consider manuscripts if written in a neat, legible hand? (Ask this latter question if it is impossible for you to have your play copied on typewriter.)

I enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for reply, and, thanking you very much for this courtesy, I am,  
Respectfully yours,  
(Name and full address.)

The above is intended merely as an idea; you may form the letter in your own style. You may, of course, begin your work NOW, and have one or more plays in proper form for presentation by the time you receive your replies to above letters. **BE SURE TO ENCLOSE A SELF-ADDRESSED, STAMPED ENVELOPE FOR REPLY WITH EACH OF THESE LETTERS.** The replies you receive will enable you to choose the companies to whom you will submit your work as a first trial. Should they reject it, send it to another and another and another. **ALWAYS WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE THE REJECTION OF ONE COMPANY BEFORE SUBMITTING THE SAME PLAY TO ANOTHER.** You cannot legally sell the rights of one play to more than one company; such an attempt would be dishonorable, and you would place yourself open to prosecution. If your work is in the least available, you will soon find a company willing to produce it, and to them you will award the sole rights.

Please understand that the list of producers included with this book was recently compiled. Publishers endeavor to keep this list up to date, but they cannot issue a revised list every week; and it may be that the requirements of some certain producer two weeks ago may have changed by this time. You will note that the list of producers bears a number at the top. Should you desire, a few months hence, to secure a revised list, send twelve cents in stamps to The Atlas Publishing Company, **BEING SURE TO STATE THE NUMBER OF LIST YOU HAVE AND THE SERIAL NUMBER OF YOUR INSTRUCTION BOOK, MARKED IN RUBBER STAMP ON TITLE PAGE;** if a revised list has not been issued since your list was printed, they will promptly return your money; if a new list has been printed, they will immediately mail one to you.

Note what particular **KIND** of plays each company wants, and endeavor to submit your plays to the companies demanding the kind you have written. If a certain company is wanting only society dramas, do not send them an Indian play. If they want only stories of Western life, do not send them a play dealing with New York society.

You may also have a play that you **KNOW** is suitable to the style of acting of some well-known actor or actress, then forward it to that company; but do not include a letter stating your opinion. If the play bears merit, they will readily see its possibilities and adaptability to some particular actor in their company.

If your play is rejected, see that it is in a neat, presentable form for the next producer; if it shows "travel-stains," it will give a bad impression. Make it look as though this were the first time you had offered it; it is unnecessary for the next company to know that it has been previously rejected.

If a play is declined by several companies, it is no sign that it does not bear much merit. Nine companies may refuse it, while the tenth will accept it, be glad to get it, and pay a good price for it. "Keep your plays traveling" from place to place until they **ARE** accepted. If you are going to become discouraged at the first or second or third rejection slip you receive, you had better not try the work, as you will be wasting time.

Join the Persevering Class, and your battle is half-won; improve just a little on each succeeding effort and the victory is yours.

### Section 30.—TIME REQUIRED FOR COMPANY TO PASS JUDGMENT ON A PLAY.

It takes from five days to four weeks. Some are slower than others in this respect; but you can be working on new plays while you are awaiting returns from those already submitted. The more plays you keep traveling, the more enthusiasm you can throw into the work. We do not mean by this, to turn out completed plays as fast as your imagination and hand will allow. It is far better to write one play per month and make it a good one than one every day with a weak plot and no originality. Every time you have the inspiration and story in your mind, write it out, revise it properly, and send it along. If you have several plays "on the road," your successes here and there will offset any disappointment that the rejected scripts may bring you.

Keep a strict record of each play in a note-book, showing Title, Name of Producer to whom submitted, date sent, date you receive the return of play (if rejected), name of next producer to whom submitted, date, etc. If you do not hear from your play in about four weeks, write them a courteous letter, giving title and date mailed. Do not accuse them of dishonesty; merely ask that they please reply at once, and if play is not suitable to their requirements, to return it. If you do not receive reply to this letter in ten days, write them again, stating that you are going to submit play elsewhere unless you hear from them immediately. Send this by registered letter and demand a receipt from postoffice. Then if you do not receive reply within ten days, re-copy play and send it to another company. The usual indication, however, is that the longer the company retains the play, the more encouraging are your chances for a sale. If it is absolutely unfit for their purposes, they generally return it immediately.

If your play is accepted, producers will send you a form of contract which you are to sign and return, giving to them the sole rights to produce and copyright it, also stating that you are the originator of the story. If you have committed plagiarism, stolen the idea from another, you are obtaining money under false pretenses.

Remember that these companies are not responsible if your play should be lost; this is why you should retain a copy of it. And, above all, do not lose your temper and make any false accusations that your play or ideas have been stolen.

### Section 31.—TIME REQUIRED TO WRITE A PLAY.

Do not be in a hurry to send your play away just as soon as it is completed; it is well to keep it for several days, read it over every day, and see if there is not some improvement you might make, some minor scene you might omit, some leader that you can avoid by inserting another scene that would add flavor to the story. When you read it over about the fifth time, it will often appear altogether different than it did at the first reading. Perhaps you have a brother or sister or friend who will go over it with you; he may see it in an entirely different light. Ask for his honest criticism and any suggestion that he can make that might improve it. Particularly

note if there is any part that does not seem exactly clear to him, if the scene action is readily understood as he reads; you will often discover a weak point in this way.

You cannot prepare a photoplay in an hour, and do yourself justice. It should be revised and rewritten several times until you are confident that it is in the very best form of composition, conciseness, and clearness. When you once have the entire story vividly impressed upon your mind, the task of putting it in technical form requires but a very short time. Some of the very best plays have been prepared in proper form within one evening.

### Section 32.—COPYRIGHTS.

You cannot obtain a copyright on a written manuscript, such as a photoplay or short story, unless you were going to have it printed in book or pamphlet form and offer it for sale to the public. You are offering it for sale only to one individual or company; if your play is accepted, the company produces it, copyrights the films (NOT the written manuscript), and offers it for sale to the public.

However, we believe EVERYONE of the prominent producers to be thoroughly reliable. A short-story writer never hesitates to send a manuscript to any of the standard magazines, without copyright; then why should the photoplaywright hesitate with his work?

Common law also protects you. If you have written a photoplay, no one has a legal right to steal your idea. If you can prove that this has been done, you have recourse under common law, and can prosecute the plagiarist.

### Section 33.—INTEGRITY OF FILM COMPANIES.

It is amusing to note the number of aspiring photoplaywrights who have the idea that their plot will be stolen by the producer and the play rejected. The thought never occurs to them that a dozen other writers among our ninety million people may have the same idea and form a play along the very same lines. Then, should they chance to see a play at some future time somewhat similar in theme, they immediately accuse the producer of dishonesty. While we cannot prove that this has NEVER been done, we do not believe it would occur in more than one instance out of a thousand. Producers are pleased to get a good play, and realize that if they do not treat the author fairly he will send his next play elsewhere; while if they pay him the full worth of his script he will continue sending all of his work to them. They will be delighted to discover in you a new writer who can turn out scripts adapted to their needs, and will immediately write you, urging you to PLEASE continue sending your work to them. We feel confident that all suspicions as to any dishonesty upon the part of the most prominent producers is unfounded.

I do not mean to claim that an idea has never been stolen, but I could not name a company, to my knowledge, which has done this. I DO KNOW, however, that there have been plagiarists who have stolen the ideas of others and sent them to the film companies as their own. Then why condemn ALL producers if once in a long time some insignificant and unscrupulous producer has broken the bonds of honesty?

It seems to be one of the first questions the inexperienced writer will ask, "What is to prevent it?" It

never occurs to him that two people, or ten people, can have the same inspiration and write practically the same story. I have heard of instances where a producer will receive as many as three or four stories the same week from as many different writers, one, perhaps, from Texas, one from California, another from Michigan, and one from Maine, with absolutely the same idea or plot, different characters, of course, the details varying, one a little better than the others, but all expressing the same idea. The editor, of course, chooses the best one of the lot and returns the others. Eventually a howl will likely arise from three different States, accusing the editor of theft. My own confidence is so great that I would not hesitate to mail twenty-five photoplays today to different producers, and wager as many dollars that I would receive fair and honorable treatment on every one submitted.

If these companies are willing to trust YOU to send them original ideas, not copied from some book, magazine, or photoplay, then WHY can you not trust them?

### Section 34.—PERSEVERANCE.

When you have mailed your first manuscript, do not await reply; write another and another. If you have ten plays traveling, so much the better. One nice check will compensate you for two or three rejection slips. "Keep 'em moving."

When you have succeeded with your single-reel plays, attempt the double-reels and three-reel plays. Do not be satisfied until you have reached the top. Be persistent. Many of our very best writers, who have written dozens of successful plays, still receive rejection slips; but they do not give a forlorn sigh and quit, they immediately forward the play to another company. A rejection slip means that you have only one man's decision; don't forget that there are twenty-five others to try. Neither does it mean that your play lacks merit. There are many reasons why he may have declined it. Perhaps they are not producing that particular kind just at this time; perhaps the characters are not just suitable to their actors at present; perhaps they have a good supply of plays just now of this particular style, would have been glad to receive this play two months ago, or would be glad to get it two months hence. There may be two or three other companies badly in need of just this kind of play. You may send it to seven, eight, or nine companies and receive as many rejection slips. The tenth company may accept it, be delighted to get it, and pay a good price for it. Perhaps you have spent the exorbitant(?) sum of forty cents in postage and receive a check for thirty dollars. Is not the balance on right side of your ledger?

The majority of producers, when declining a play, enclose a printed rejection slip, on which they check REASON why they cannot accept it. However, do not write them a letter asking why they could not use it; they have not the time to carry on a correspondence with you. Spend this same time more profitably by making any alterations that you think will improve your story, re-copy it if papers show any travel-stains, and send it on to another company.

Remember that the most successful photoplaywright today was at one time just beginning, and that the most successful ones do not sell every manuscript they write to the first company submitted. Does a salesman sell his goods to every dealer upon whom he calls? No, sir, he

does not. If he did, he could command an annual salary of a million dollars. The same applies to selling photoplays. You CANNOT expect to find a buyer in the first company to whom you submit each new play.

### Section 35.—MISCELLANEOUS NOTES.

The quickest and surest way to learn to write photoplays is to WRITE THEM. "Practice makes perfect."

Write your plays under your own name. A nom de plume is silly and useless; you should certainly not be ashamed of your success.

Do not waste your time in building false hopes that you would make a complete success as a moving picture actor; you will be disillusioned if you do. These actors have had years of experience on the legitimate stage before entering this work. The amateur stands practically no chance, the applications of the experienced actors, constantly on file, receiving all preference.

It is now customary with some producers to show name of author below title, on the screen, with each play produced; and I think the time is coming when

this will be done by every company, the same as the author's name in a book. It will be a proud moment in your life when you see YOUR name flashed on the screen for the first time. Therefore, try to make it a good play to do credit to a good name.

Don't think that technique is the chief essential of success. Technique is very important, but the story, its plot, scene action, and human interest, are more so.

Talking pictures are produced by the combined use of motion pictures and phonograph. This work has not as yet reached the perfection of the regular motion picture, and is not treated upon in this manual.

Please remember that neither the author of this book, nor the publishers, will read, revise, criticize, buy, or sell photoplays. Producers prefer to buy DIRECT FROM THE WRITER. Your manuscripts must therefore be mailed to the producing companies shown on list included with this book.

It is an excellent idea to paste the List of Producers (included with this work) onto the inside cover of book, to prevent its loss.

Adopt as your golden rule, "I WILL SUCCEED."

*NOTE—The following story is not presented as a model photoplay, but is submitted to illustrate the various forms of technique discussed in the preceding pages. The story might be improved by omitting some of the bust scenes, visions, leaders, etc., but we have endeavored to embody one or more illustrations of every point treated upon in the instructions.*

---

W. L. Gordon,  
518 Walnut St.,  
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Submitted at usual rates.

## THE LOST LETTER.

### SYNOPSIS.

Roy Martin and his brother, George, are rivals for the hand of Mabel Warren. George steals a letter containing money which has been sent to Mabel, confiscates the money, and then conceals the letter under the lining of Roy's hat. He then visits Nathan, a fortune-teller, and conspires to bring Roy and Mabel to visit Nathan, who is to tell Mabel where she will find the lost letter. The conspiracy is successful, and Roy is accused of theft. Roy conceals himself in the closet of his bedroom, the same evening, and through the keyhole sees George enter and count the stolen money. George departs. Roy is angry until he remembers and reads a letter from their dead mother pledging Roy to be kind and loyal to his brother.

Some weeks later George has gained favor with Mabel. Roy is downcast, and one day while in a saloon reads a notice of the coming marriage of George and Mabel. Nathan happens to be present in the saloon, and recognizes Roy, who is prostrated and removed to a hospital. Nathan is remorseful, visits Mabel, and in the presence of George denounces him. George finally confesses, and the three visit the hospital. George is forgiven, Nathan receives gratitude, while Mabel pledges a new love for Roy that knows no doubt.

### CAST.

Mabel Warren.  
Roy Martin, in love with Mabel.  
George Martin, Roy's brother and rival.  
Nathan, a fortune-teller.  
Postman, in scene 1.  
Old Lady, in scene 23.  
Two Boys, in scene 23.  
Bar-tender, in scenes 26 - 28 - 29.  
Saloon Habitues in scenes 26 - 28 - 29.  
Two Ambulance Officers in scenes 28 - 29.  
Nurse in scenes 31 - 34.  
Doctor in scene 31.

### SCENE PLOT.

**EXTERIORS:**—Front porch of Mabel's home, 1 - 3 - 5 - 11 - 13 - 17 - 33.  
Front porch (Bust scene), 6.  
Nathan's cottage, 8 - 14.  
Disreputable saloon, 29.

**INTERIORS:**—Living room of Mabel's home, 2 - 4 - 7 - 10 - 12 - 25 - 27 - 30 - 32.  
Nathan's room, 9 - 15.  
Roy's bedroom, 16 - 18 - 22 - 24.  
Closet door (Bust scene), 19 - 21.  
Roy's bedroom (mask scene), 20.  
A living-room (vision scene), 23.  
Disreputable saloon, 26 - 28.  
Hospital ward, 31 - 34.





SCENARIO.

1. Front porch of Mabel's home; window in background. Mabel and Roy on steps - love scene - postman enters and hands registered letter to Mabel - Mabel signs receipt - postman exits - Mabel opens letter - contains money - Mabel reads letter.

Show letter - and you and Roy can use this hundred to purchase a wedding gift. With much love,  
Uncle Charles.

Back to scene. Mabel delighted - reads letter again - George enters unobserved.

Leader - ROY'S BROTHER GEORGE IS A RIVAL SUITOR.

Back to scene, George conceals himself behind bushes - displeased - watches - Roy reads letter - George listens - shakes fist at Roy - Roy and Mabel happily exeunt into house.

2. Mabel's living-room. Mabel and Roy enter - read letter together - count money - Mabel puts money and letter back into envelope - tosses it onto table near window - Mabel exits - Mabel enters - calls Roy - both exeunt into adjoining room.
3. Same as 1 (Front porch). George stealthily ascends steps onto porch - listens at window - peeps in.
4. Same as 2 (Living-room). George peeping through window - takes knife out of pocket - begins working at window latch.
5. Same as 1 (Front porch). Window now open - George reaches in - takes letter - closes window - looks around - sees Roy's hat on steps - studies - decides on stratagem - shakes fist at window - picks up Roy's hat.
6. (BUST scene.) George takes money out of envelope - puts money in pocket - places letter and envelope under lining in crown of Roy's hat - replaces hat on step - exits running.
7. Same as 2 (Living-room). Mabel and Roy enter from adjoining room - Mabel discovers letter gone - excitement - search is futile.
8. Exterior of Nathan's humble cottage; sign on door, 'NATHAN, THE FORTUNE-TELLER.' George enters - knocks at door - exits into house.
9. Interior of Nathan's room; Nathan smoking cob-pipe. George enters - they are seated - George talks earnestly.





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THE LOST LETTER.

Leader - GEORGE BRIBES THE FORTUNE-TELLER AND FORMS A CONSPIRACY.

Back to scene. George explains conspiracy - gives Nathan some money - Nathan agrees - George exits excitedly.

10. Same as 2 (Living-room). Mabel and Roy still searching.

11. Same as 1 (Front porch). George enters - ascends steps - rings bell.

12. Same as 2 (Living-room). Mabel exits - Mabel and George enter - friendly greeting - Mabel explains lost letter - George feigns regret and aids in search.

Leader - GEORGE PROPOSES CONSULTING NATHAN, THE FORTUNE-TELLER.

Back to scene. George explains - Roy laughs and objects - Mabel amused - George urges - Mabel consents - Roy reluctantly agrees - all exit.

13. Same as 1 (Front porch). All enter and exit.

14. Same as 8 (Exterior of Nathan's cottage). All enter - George knocks at door - all exit into cottage.

15. Same as 9 (Interior of Nathan's cottage). All enter - Nathan bows them to chairs - Nathan exits into adjoining room - George talks earnestly - Mabel and Roy eagerly listen:

Leader - ''ONCE I LOST A DIAMOND PIN, AND NATHAN TOLD ME WHERE TO FIND IT.''

Back to scene. George talking - Nathan enters - tells Mabel's fortune from palm of hand - Mabel asks questions - Nathan glances at George, who winks - Nathan points to Roy's hat - Mabel amused - laughs - Roy angered - starts toward Nathan - George intercedes - Nathan signifies, ''Prove it false'' - Roy indignant - Mabel still amused - signifies ''a joke'' - takes Roy's hat - laughingly turns back lining - letter falls out - Mabel breaks envelope - money gone - Mabel swoons - Roy speechless - then suspects George - signifies ''you did that'' - George sneers - Mabel revives - orders Roy to go - Roy pleads innocence - Mabel hysterical - will not relent - Roy exits - George assists Mabel to feet - a paper, unobserved, falls out of George's pocket - Nathan stealthily picks it up and conceals it - George winks at Nathan - George and Mabel exeunt - Nathan reads

Show telegram - George Martin  
509 Walnut & Vine sts Cincinnati  
Deal closed Mailing letter tonight  
A M Harris

Back to scene. Nathan folds telegram and puts in pocket.



W. L. Gordon,  
518 Walnut St.,  
Cincinnati, Ohio.

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THE LOST LETTER.

Leader - THE SAME EVENING.

16. Roy and George's bedroom. Roy enters dejectedly - deep thought - takes off coat and hat - throws them on bed - drops into chair - depressed.
17. Same as 1 (Front porch). Mabel and George enter - Mabel weeping - George tries to console her - Mabel exits into house - George laughs - signifies ''I'll get her yet'' - George exits.
18. Same as 16 (Bedroom). Roy still in chair - hears steps - conceals hat and coat - hides in closet - George enters - looks around - laughs - draws window shade - takes money out of pocket - counts it.
19. (BUST scene). Closet door. Roy peeping through keyhole.
20. (MASK scene, form of keyhole.) George counting money.
21. Same as 19 (Closet door). Roy signifies ''I thought so.''
22. Same as 18 (Bedroom). George puts money back in pocket - takes Mabel's photograph off dresser.

Show PHOTOGRAPH OF MABEL.

Back to scene. George kisses photo - exits - Roy enters from closet - angry - reflects - takes letter from drawer - reads.

Show LETTER - and be kind to your brother, is my last request.

Devotedly, Mother.

Back to scene. Roy starts to tear letter - stops - sinks into chair - closes eyes - dissolve into

23. (VISION scene) living-room. Gray-haired woman in chair - a lad kneeling at her lap - another lad tumbling around on floor, romping, whistling - woman strokes lad's hair - looks at other lad - sadly shakes head - signifies ''be kind to your brother'' - lad takes her hand - talks earnestly - dissolve into
24. Same as 22 (Bedroom). Roy opens eyes - looks around - startled - rubs eyes - takes Mabel's photo - breaks down - weeps.

Leader - A FEW WEEKS LATER.

25. Same as 2 (Mabel's living-room). Mabel at piano - bell rings - Mabel exits - enters, followed by George - George very attentive - Mabel friendly but reminiscent - unhappy.
26. Disreputable saloon; several tough-looking customers at bar - Nathan enters - greeted by colleagues - Nathan pretends to tell their fortunes by palms - all joke and laugh



Leader - ROY IS DOWNCAST.

Back to scene. Roy enters - sits at table - orders drink - takes newspaper from pocket - reads - startled - overcome with emotion - Nathan notices and comes forward - Roy swoons - Nathan picks up newspaper - reads

Show newspaper article - . . . A BRILLIANT WEDDING  
TO BE CELEBRATED  
AT WARREN HOME

---

Mr. George Martin and Miss Mabel Warren, only daughter of the late Cornelius Warren, will be married next Tuesday at the bride's home on Wendell avenue, and is the culmination of—

Back to scene. Bartender and bystanders endeavor to revive Roy - Nathan stares - studies - takes paper from pocket

Show telegram as in scene 15.

Back to scene. Nathan looks at telegram, then at paper, then at Roy - lifts Roy's hat - stares into his face - nods his recognition - meditates - bartender unable to revive Roy - goes to phone.

27. Same as 25 (Living-room). George tries to put arm around Mabel - she repulses him - Mabel despondent and thoughtful.
28. Same as 26. Two officers enter with stretcher - put Roy on it - exeunt, followed by Nathan and crowd.
29. Exterior of saloon. Officers and crowd enter from saloon - place Roy in ambulance, which exits - crowd exits into saloon - Nathan stands with newspaper and telegram in hand - reads again - remorseful - resolves to act - determined manner - hurriedly exits down street.
30. Same as 25 (Living-room). Mabel and George talking - bell rings - Mabel exits - George goes to window - looks out - startled - displeased - paces floor - Mabel and Nathan enter - Mabel puzzled - Nathan tells story - points to George - George wants to throw him out - Mabel interferes - urges Nathan on - Mabel believes - George confesses.
31. Hospital ward. Roy in bed - nurse and doctor attending.
32. Same as 30 (Living-room). George remorseful - breaks down - Mabel exits - enters with hat on - all exit together.
33. Same as 1 (Front porch). All enter and exit.



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THE LOST LETTER.

34. Same as 31 (Hospital ward). Roy asleep - nurse moves around quietly - nurse exits.

Show VISION - OF MABEL ABOVE BED.

Back to scene. Roy awakes - stretches out arms - vision vanishes - gazes around at strange surroundings - nurse enters - signifies callers - opens door - Mabel, George, and Nathan enter - Roy surprised - George takes Roy's hand - confesses - takes Mabel's hand and places it in Roy's - Mabel throws herself on side of bed and sobs - Roy shakes hands with Nathan - clasps Mabel in arms - Nathan and nurse exeunt - George turns to go - stops - Mabel and Roy look up - George talks

Leader - ''AM I FORGIVEN?''

Back to scene. Roy and Mabel both shake his hand - signify ''yes'' - George slowly exits - love scene.

END.





# WHERE TO SELL Short Stories, Poems, Etc.

***"Every Aspirant  
MUST HAVE IT"***

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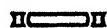
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